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Church or Chapel?

An Eirenicon

by

The Reverend Joseph Hammond.

Fourth edition

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PREFACE.

EVER since, now nine-and-twenty years ago, I saw the Turkish police lounging in the portals of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and understood that the presence of these unbelievers was a necessity, in the "city of the vision of peace," to stay the disciples of the Prince of Peace from flying at each other's throats; ever since I learned that at the Greek Easter the Latin monks with a light heart will hold up the rites of their fellow-Christians to public derision,[1] and knew that the Crimean War, with all its blood and butchery, sprang out of the jealousies of these same Christians, out of their squabbles over a cupboard and a bunch of keys,[2] I have felt, as I make no doubt others have done before me, a sort of personal humiliation in the divisions of Christendom. And a ministry of a quarter of a century, with its constant experience of the rivalries and bickerings[3] of the religious communions at home, has confirmed me in the belief that our unhappy divisions constitute not only an unspeakable reproach, but a grave danger to that faith which alone can regenerate our race, and which is to me, I hope, dearer than life. Our miserable sectarianism is paralysing and desolating our Christianity. It is largely

[1] Stanley: Sinai and Palestine.
[2] Kinglake: Invasion of the Crimea.
[3] *Vide* the religious newspapers.

because of this that millions of our people have drifted away, not indeed from Christianity, but from the Church. They see—the proofs are in every street, in every cemetery even—that the religion which was meant to be the grand uniter of humanity, which was to comprehend Greek and Jew, bond and free, in one sacred brotherhood, has somehow failed of its object; it would rather seem to have set men by the ears. And so they wait, *ces autres:* they stand aloof from all religion, until we can agree amongst ourselves. At least, they *might* listen to us then: they will never listen to us before. Our trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who will rally round our banner?

I have therefore laboured for some time past, though with indifferent success, for the reconciliation of the divided members of Christ's body. I say "with indifferent success." I might have said with pain and disappointment; for I have discovered that even to aim at comprehension is a crime in the eyes of some Christians. But recent events have filled me with hope. Disintegration would seem to have spent its force. Reunion is not only "in the air," but, both in Canada and in this country, conferences of Churchmen and Nonconformists have actually met and have agreed to a sort of preliminary basis of Reunion.

But what appears to be most needed at the present moment is—information. Half our differences are the result of misunderstanding. Church and Chapel alike misconceive, and therefore misrepresent, each other. Hence the Lambeth Conference of last year passed the following resolution:—

"That this Conference recommends as of great importance, in tending to bring about Reunion, the dissemination of information respecting the standards of doctrine and the formularies in use in the Anglican Church; and recommends that information be dis-

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seminated, on the other hand, respecting the authoritative standards of doctrine, worship, and government adopted by the other bodies of Christians into which the English-speaking races are divided."

To this recommendation, and particularly to the first part of it, this volume aspires to give effect. Its main object is to explain and vindicate those doctrines and usages of the English Church which are constantly alleged as "the ground of Religious Nonconformity." Whilst it is hoped that it may afford instruction to Church people on questions which are frequently debated amongst themselves, it is addressed more especially to those devout Nonconformists to whom I owe my first lessons in religion. I make no apology for appealing to *them*. I can at least understand their difficulties, and of many of them I think I have found the solution. May He who "loved the Church and gave Himself for it" deign to use this book, which embodies the thoughts of many years, as a true EIRENICON to His people!

VICARAGE, ST. AUSTELL, *November* 29, 1880

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

In preparing a new edition of this work I have inserted in the text two additional chapters, one at page 324 on the charge of Sacerdotalism, and a second (p. 334) on the accusation so freely made against the clergy by a certain class of Nonconformists that they do not preach the gospel, and, with rare exceptions, do not even know what it is. I have also added a considerable number of notes, illustrative of various points, at the end of chapters: and where this arrangement has not been practicable, the additional matter will be found in the Appendix. In some of these notes and in several pages of the Appendix I have considered the discussions of the recent "Langham Street Conference," at which—a most hopeful and encouraging sign—many of the differences between Church and Chapel were debated with perfect charity and good temper. I may perhaps be allowed to direct attention to Note G, as this more especially deals with what one of the speakers correctly described as "the crux of the differences between us."

I must add an expression of my gratitude to the Press for the extremely kind and flattering recognition which—with only one exception, so far as I know—they have accorded to my poor efforts to promote charity and unity amongst Christian people. Some of my critics, and those the most friendly, have taken exception—I confess it seems to me with insufficient reason—to the title Eirenicon, but none have impugned the spirit or the statements of the book. I send forth this second edition with the earnest hope and prayer that it may obtain, still more than the first, a patient hearing from our separated brethren, and may help forward that most desirable of all consummations, the reunion of Christ's scattered sheep in one flock under the One Shepherd.

Vicarage, St. Austell, *July* 12, 1890.

CONTENTS.

CHAP. PAGE

I. INTRODUCTORY 1

Part I.

OF THE CHURCH.

II. OUR UNHAPPY DIVISIONS:—Proofs of error; sources of weakness; occasions of contempt . . . 7

III. SEPARATION SINFUL:—The Church before Christ one and indivisible 16

IV. SEPARATION SINFUL:—The same Church after Christ one and indivisible 22

V. SEPARATION SINFUL:—The Church or "body of Christ" one visible body 29

VI. SEPARATION SINFUL:—The "Kingdom of Heaven" one organised and visible Empire 37

VII. SOME OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED:—1. "A visible body must have a visible head." 2. "Is a man to leave the Church or to lose his soul?" . . 45

VIII. SOME FURTHER OBJECTIONS:—1. "The Scripture speaks of 'Churches.'" 2. "The Kingdom of Heaven," not the Church, but righteousness, &c. 3. "A spiritual body" 52

IX. CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH POLITY:—Novel; unsatisfying; practically surrendered; in conflict with Old and New Testaments 59

X. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP, I.:—Of Initiation into the Church 64

XI. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP, II.:—Of Excommunication 72

XII. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP, III.:—Of Secession from the Church 78

CHAP. PAGE

XIII. BAPTIZED NONCONFORMISTS — UNCONSCIOUS CHURCHMEN 85

XIV. THE MARKS OF THE CHURCH :—Piety and success cannot constitute a Church 89

XV. THE PLEA OF NECESSITY :—Neither the supposed necessities of the work of God nor the errors and corruptions of the Church justify a "schism in the body" 100

XVI. THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND NOT A SECT :—The Reformation—a repudiation of Papal supremacy, not an attempt to found a new Church . . 105

XVII. THE CHURCH JUSTIFIED OF HER NONCONFORMIST CHILDREN :—The old objections of Nonconformity have been gradually surrendered . 113

XVIII. CHURCHMEN AN ARGUMENT FOR THE CHURCH :—Nonconformists more likely to misconceive our doctrines than Churchmen to cling to error . 120

Part II.

OF THE DOCTRINES OF THE CHURCH.

XIX. THE GROUNDS OF NONCONFORMITY :—The teaching of the Prayer Book. Objections to be considered in this volume 129

XX. THE DOCTRINE OF THE MINISTRY, I. :—Episcopal Ordination the condition of "ministering in the Congregation" 135

XXI. THE MINISTRY, II. :—Episcopal Ordination the law of Christendom 141

XXII. THE MINISTRY, III. :—Episcopacy the teaching of Holy Scripture 147

XXIII. THE MINISTRY, IV. :—Nonconformist Ordinations in the light of Holy Scripture and Christian Antiquity 156

XXIV. THE DOCTRINE OF THE SACRAMENTS :—Sacramental Grace 163

XXV. THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM, I. :—Of Infant Baptism 170

CHAP.		PAGE
XXVI.	BAPTISM, II.:—Baptism "generally necessary to Salvation"	177
XXVII.	BAPTISM, III.:—Baptismal Regeneration .	182
XXVIII.	BAPTISM, IV.:—Baptism "for the Remission of Sins"	190
XXIX.	BAPTISM, V.:—The teaching of the Catechism	196
XXX.	THE LORD'S SUPPER, I.:—The place which the Church assigns it	204
XXXI.	THE LORD'S SUPPER, II.:—The language the Church uses respecting it	213
XXXII.	THE DOCTRINE OF CONFIRMATION, I.:—Its Authority. The Church has inherited it from the Apostles	218
XXXIII.	THE DOCTRINE OF CONFIRMATION, II.:—Its Rationale. 1. The "Laying on of hands" "from Heaven, and not of men." 2. The renewal of the Baptismal vow "good and profitable to men"	224
XXXIV.	THE DOCTRINE OF ABSOLUTION, I.:—The teachings of Common Sense	231
XXXV.	ABSOLUTION, II.:—The teaching of Holy Scripture	237
XXXVI.	ABSOLUTION, III.:—The Church's Forms of Absolution examined	244

Part III.

OF THE RITES AND OFFICES OF THE CHURCH.

XXXVII.	THE USE OF LITURGICAL FORMS:—Scriptural, Ancient, Catholic, Expedient . . .	250
XXXVIII.	MORNING AND EVENING PRAYER:—Popular objections examined	257
XXXIX.	THE ATHANASIAN CREED, I.:—Its definitions necessitated by the erroneous definitions of heretics	263
XL.	THE ATHANASIAN CREED, II.:—Its teaching on the Catholic Faith	269

CHAP. PAGE

XLI. THE ATHANASIAN CREED, III. :—The Damnatory Clauses 276

XLII. THE BURIAL SERVICE, I. :—A defence of the Church's Law of Burial 283

XLIII. THE BURIAL SERVICE, II. :—Its doctrine of the Intermediate State 290

XLIV. THE COMMINATION SERVICE :—Scriptural, reasonable, and very necessary for these times 296

XLV. THE RITE OF CONSECRATION :—A reasonable service 302

Part IV.

OF THE SPIRIT AND WORKING OF THE CHURCH.

XLVI. THE CHARGE OF INTOLERANCE :—Intolerant Churchmen not caused by the Church. Nonconformists obnoxious to this charge . . 308

XLVII. THE CHARGE OF EXCLUSIVENESS AND ARROGANCE :—Churchmen as free to maintain their principles as Nonconformists to assert theirs 316

XLVIII. THE CHARGE OF SACERDOTALISM . . . 324

XLIX. THE CHARGE OF CORRUPTING THE GOSPEL . 334

L. THE CHURCH AS BY LAW ESTABLISHED, I. :—The principle sound and scriptural . . . 342

LI. THE CHURCH AS BY LAW ESTABLISHED, II. :—Arguments against it invalid 350

LII. COMPULSORY PAYMENTS FOR RELIGION :—Tithes ordained of God ; secured by contract ; not excused by religious scruples . . . 361

LIII. WHAT JUSTIFIES SECESSION :—Nonconformity on its own showing neither necessary nor justifiable 368

APPENDIX 377

INDEX 385

CHURCH OR CHAPEL?

AN EIRENICON.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

"Qui me donnera que je voie, avant que de mourir, l'Église de Dieu comme elle etait dans les premiers jours?"

"WHY does no one try"—so I have often asked myself, so I have sometimes said to men of light and leading—"Why, in the name of GOD, does no one try, by kindly and patient 'manifestation of the truth,' to remove the huge barrier of prejudice and misconception which has so long separated, and which separates still, the brethren of the LORD in England—I mean the Churchmen and Nonconformists of the land? Why does no one in authority rise up and say, in a voice to which they could not choose but listen, 'Sirs, ye are brethren: why do ye wrong one to another'?" For brethren they are —little as you would think it from their temper and attitude and relations: brethren by reason of their discipleship; nay, more, they are members of the same body, by virtue of their baptism; joined to themselves and to their LORD by one Spirit. Ever if, as some may think, their "one baptism" counts for nothing, still they all profess and call themselves Christians. Yet the envyings, the jealousies, the positive hatreds of these

St. Matt. xii. 50.

1 Cor. xii. 13.

CHAP. I.

professing Christians—to our shame be it spoken—are proverbial. Their unseemly quarrels are a favourite jest of the infidel. The world will tell you that there is no hatred like the *odium theologicum*. "Oh, the pity of it, the pity of it!" For they all are named by the name of CHRIST; all "have a zeal for GOD;" all are (or profess to be) contending only for the truth, and striving after sound doctrine. And that truth, that sound doctrine, lies *somewhere* amongst them. It is not far from every one of them: is it always to elude their grasp, always to be involved in uncertainty? *Now*,

> "Lutheran, Popish, Calvinistic—all these creeds and doctrines three
> Extant are, but still the doubt is, where Christianity may be."

St. John xvii. 21–23.

But must it be ever thus? Is the thrice-repeated prayer of our Most HOLY LORD, offered, too, at the supreme moment of His ministry, never to be realised? Why does no one come forward—for there *are* men who could mediate between them—to suggest explanations, to speak the word of peace?[1] Of pulpit invectives, of controversial pamphlets, of the "drum ecclesiastic" we have had a surfeit. Those divines have not been few who have "proved their doctrine orthodox By apostolic blows and knocks," but somehow none of these things seem to have brought Christians much nearer to each other. Too often it has happened that "where controversy began, Christianity ended." What Jeremy Taylor says of the Eucharist controversy is true of other similar disputes:—"Men have turned the key in this lock so often that it cannot be either opened or shut, and they have unravelled the clue so long until

[1] Honourable mention must be made here of Dr. Pusey's *Eirenicon* (though that was addressed exclusively to Romanists); of Bishop Coxe's *Apollos;* of Canon Curteis's admirable *Dissent in its Relation to the Church of England;* of Mr. Garnier's *Church or Dissent*, of Prebendary Sadler's various and much valued works; of Mr. Teulon's conciliatory book on the Plymouth Brethren; and of Mr. De Soyres's *Home Reunion*. All these are *pourparlers*, but they are little more.

they have entangled it." Is it not time then that we tried a different method—"conciliation," to borrow a political phrase, instead of "coercion"? "*Nous avons eu assez de polemique*," says a French writer, "*il nous reste à avoir un peu d'irenique.*" Nor can we be deceived in thinking that the age is ripe for such an *Eirenicon*. "Re-union" (we hear on all hands) "is in the air." Christians everywhere, in Canada and the United States as well as in England, are gradually drawing nearer to each other, are growing ashamed of their everlasting strifes and divisions.[1] "The age of separation and division," says an eminent Presbyterian,[2] "is passing away, and the age of the re-union of Christendom is beginning to dawn." "The tide of fraternal feeling," writes the *Canadian Methodist*, "is rising higher and higher." "The existence of so many sects,"—I quote from the English *Methodist Times*,—"is itself a scandal and a calamity. Wherever organic disunion is not inevitable, it is an ever-increasing curse;" whilst (most gratifying testimony of all) an eminent professor in one of the American Universities—himself a Presbyterian[3]—has written a striking article showing that the process of re-union, in the shape of a "liturgical fusion," "has long been going on in America, hidden and un-noticed," and is "passing to its only logical issue in the Prayer Book" of the English Church.

The signs of the times, then, are unmistakably encouraging for those who yearn and pray for the re-union of Christendom, and they all point, like the well-known prophecy of De Maistre, to the Church of England as destined to be by Divine Providence the rallying-point of Christ's dispersed and distracted flock. It is admitted

[1] "I am as tired as any man of sect-life; of this and the other portion of the body becoming a separated limb; men combining together on this and the other point or points, one or five, as the case may be. . . . I am tired of all this, and have long been so."—Binney, quoted in *Curteis's Bampton Lectures*, p. 6 (Ninth Edition).

[2] Dr. Philip Schaff.

[3] Dr. C. W. Shields in *The Century* for November 1885.

CHAP. I.

on all hands that for some time past the tide has been setting steadily in favour of the Church—in the United States even more than in England. Even Nonconformists, suckled in the "Dissidence of Dissent," are looking towards her with wondering and wistful gaze. And well they may, for the revival and extension of the Anglican communion is by far the most wonderful feature of the Victorian era. Yes, the age is fast ripening for efforts after reconciliation, for peaceful overtures, for an appeal to our common Christianity, but the man is not forthcoming—the Augustine, the Hooker—who shall speak the word of peace.

But—this, too, I have said to myself—may it not be that it is just because we are looking for an Athanasius or an Augustine that the effort after explanation and re-union has not been made long ago. "The best is constantly the enemy of the good," and because *we* cannot grapple with this question as a Bossuet or a Barrow would have done, we fold our hands and do nothing. "I am Davus, not Œdipus" is our excuse. And so we bury our one talent—because it is but one—and because we cannot accomplish great things we attempt nothing. We forget that "all GOD's great movements have been accomplished by insignificant minorities," and we are slow to learn the lesson taught by the experience of every age:

> "That low man seeks a little thing to do,
> Sees it and does it;
> This high man will a great thing to pursue,
> Dies ere he knows it."

So the years and the decades have rolled by, till we are now in the fourth century of Christian disintegration, and still we "keep silence, yea, even from good words," and no effort is made to heal the hurt of the daughter of Zion.

The writer of this volume is not an Athanase, as he knows well enough, but he lays claim, nevertheless, to one special qualification for the extremely difficult and delicate task of addressing an EIRENICON to Nonconformists,

if any such will listen to him. He feels it a duty, even if his should be a *vox clamantis*, to attempt to remove some of the objections which Nonconformists feel and express to the doctrines and discipline of the English Church, because he has known and wrestled with these objections himself. "With a great sum obtained I this freedom." Cradled in Nonconformity, he has had to think out the points at issue between Church and Chapel for himself. He is profoundly impressed with the idea—the outcome of his own experience—that many of our divergencies and much of our estrangement are the result of pure misunderstanding. Too often have our disputations been like that midnight conflict at Syracuse, when in the dark the opposing forces mistook each other's watchwords and battle-cries. The writer knows that many Nonconformists utterly misconceive the teachings of the Church, and that Churchmen constantly have extraordinary ideas of the Chapel. He fancies he can understand the average Dissenter's difficulties; at least he is thoroughly familiar with their ideas and modes of thought. He is not so sanguine as to suppose that he can remove *all* prejudice, *all* misconception, either on the part of Churchmen or chapel-goers, but he does hope, if he can but secure a patient and dispassionate hearing, to remove *some*. He does claim this, too, for himself that, whilst firmly attached to the Church, and persuaded of the truth of her teachings, he is very sensible of her serious defects and shortcomings, especially in the past; and, on the other hand, that whilst he must hold that Nonconformists have departed, some in one direction, some in another, from the "faith once delivered to the saints," still he is penetrated with a profound respect for their personal piety, for their zeal, and for their great achievements. The sacred memories of his youth, if nothing else, would compel him to "speak gently of our sister's fall," would seal his lips against sneers and reviling. It is in this spirit, and praying the blessing of the church's Head, that he respectfully addresses his EIRENICON to

Acts xxii. 28.

CHAP. I.

the Nonconformists of England and America. "Go, little book; GOD give thee good passage."

"O Thou who didst on that last night,
Ere death had paled Thy brow,
Speak sweetly of Love's power and might
As none could speak but Thou!
Remind Thy little flock, alas!
So prone to disagree,
That Thy desire and last prayer was
For Christian unity."

Part I.

OF THE CHURCH.

CHAPTER II.

OUR UNHAPPY DIVISIONS.

"Is it that we are so accustomed to disunion that we have lost all sense of the weakness and strife which it occasions: that the fox has been so long without his tail that he really believes it better to be tailless?"—*Methodist Times.*

Religion in England—and the same may be said of America, of Australia, and of every country which Englishmen have colonised,—religion in England has one feature, one peculiarity, which above all others strikes the intelligent foreigner who visits our shores—yes, and strikes many of our own countrymen too—and that is the prodigious number of "sects" or "denominations" into which our English Christianity is divided. No thoughtful person can fail to remark it, because conspicuous proofs are to be found in almost every street and every village, in the shape of the different "places of worship" erected and maintained by these different religious bodies. In my own parish of 6000 souls—and it is a type of many more—we have *twelve* different denominations. It was stated at the Methodist Œcumenical Conference that in some American villages Methodism alone is represented by *six* different bodies. In Carlisle, the Plymouth Brethren are, or were, split up into *five* sections, each with its own meeting-house. There they stand, churches and chapels, the prominent buildings of the town or hamlet, all challeng-

CHAP. II.

ing attention by their size or architecture, and all of them *monuments of division!* And if he is at all curious in the matter—and many critics of our religion, both British and foreign, are extremely curious—and makes careful inquiry into the number and tenets of these different denominations, he finds, always to his astonishment, too often to his amusement, that their number is legion; he finds that, side by side with the National or "Established" Church, there are no less than 226 *sects* —so the latest returns of the Registrar-General inform us—some of them, no doubt, extremely small, many of them differing only in a few particulars from others, yet each a distinct and separate body, with its own rules and officers and organisation, and most of them claiming to be complete and independent "Christian churches." This is the one impression, and a very natural and obvious one too, which many observers carry away with them of our religion, that it is *seamed through and through with divisions;* that we have all been baptized (as an old Scot once prayed) "into the spirit of the disruption;" and that we have wrangled and separated about tweedledum and tweedledee. "In my country," said a Frenchwoman, with a sneer, "we have one religion and a hundred and one soups; in yours I have observed but one soup and a hundred and one religions."

See Appendix, Note A.

Now there are Christians—many of our Nonconformist brethren are of the number—to whom this state of things causes neither shame nor distress, but who regard it, on the contrary, with complacency and satisfaction. To them these manifold divisions are so many proofs of the deep thought and attention which our countrymen bestow on the paramount subject of religion. They see in them so many evidences of the vitality and earnestness of our convictions; evidences, too, of the free exercise of that right of private judgment which is supposed to be the crowning glory of Protestantism. They sincerely believe, moreover, that a little competition is just as beneficial in religion as in trade and other matters, and that if all Christians thought alike we

should soon be reduced to stagnation.[1] Anyhow, they see no harm in these divisions; they accept them as inevitable; on the whole, they believe them to be beneficial. The first step towards re-union, consequently, must be to prove that such division *is in itself sinful*, as being in opposition to the revealed will of God: that it also carries on the face of it the stamp of error and misbelief: that it fritters away the energies of Christians, and paralyses their efforts for the regeneration of the world: and, finally, that it does infinite harm to religion by bringing it into contempt, and giving cause to its enemies to blaspheme. In the present chapter I shall confine myself to the last three of these positions, reserving the proof of the *sinfulness* of separation for future consideration. I say then: CHAP. II.

I. *The divisions of Christians are a clear proof of error somewhere—a plain proof that some at least of these different bodies are holding and teaching what is untrue.* For surely it is clear that doctrines and systems which contradict each other cannot all be right; surely it is plain that if A affirms what B denies, one or the other must be wrong. If, for example, the Friends or the Plymouth Brethren are right in their peculiar tenets, then all other Christians must be wrong. If the so-called Baptists are right, then all other Christians, being Paedo-baptists, must be wrong. If Churchmen are right in their doctrines of the Church and the sacraments, then Nonconformists, who repudiate these doctrines, must be wrong. All this is obvious to the meanest understanding. And so the world, the millions who stand outside all the communions, they have some show of reason in declining to listen to us at all, because it is clear to them that many of the denominations—*which* they do not pause to ask—must necessarily be teaching untruth, and would inevitably lead them astray. It has

See Appendix, Note B.

[1] "I believe that there ought to be five or six different denominations, *at least*. . . . It is not to be desired that there should be absolute organic unity among the Christians of the world."—*H. W. Beecher, in Coxe, Apollos.*

CHAP. II

happened before now that an infidel has said to an aggressive Christian, "Hadn't you better agree among yourselves before you come and talk to me?" Some forty years ago an English clergyman went forth on a mission to the Roman Catholics of Italy. A Turin newspaper published a long list of the sects of England, and then triumphantly asked, "To which of all these does this worthy gentleman come to convert us?" Yes, we cannot deny it; our unhappy divisions bear on their front the stamp of error, the certificate of untruth. The Pagan, the Mohammedan, the "Jew, Turk, and Infidel," each can see for himself—see from the evidence supplied by Christians themselves—that many bodies of Christians *must* be propagating error; must, if he listens to them, lead him into perilous misbeliefs. In the city of Rome, the seat of the Papacy, as if to supply Roman Catholics with a conclusive argument against the Reformation, the handful of Protestants, 4000 in number, are divided into *nineteen* different denominations. From the roof of one of the buildings of Madras the natives can count *nine* separate Christian meeting-houses, each representing a particular form of Christianity—each by its very existence condemning other and earlier types of our religion: and yet men wonder why our preaching is not more successful.[1] Truly "the fault is in thine own people." "The world," says Dr. Milligan, a Presbyterian, "will never be converted by a disunited church." "In our present divided state," writes a veteran missionary, Dr. Alexander Williamson, himself not a Churchman, "we will never Christianise China—never!"

For neither can the Christian reply to the infidel at home, nor the missionary to the Mohammedan abroad, that Christians only differ on subjects of very secondary importance, and that they are agreed as to all cardinal points. It may be true that "men who have worshipped

[1] "Quand de tels hommes n'auraient contre eux que leurs divisions, il n'en faudrait pas davantage pour les frapper d'impuissance."—De Maistre, in *Curteis*, p. 17.

cows will think but little of the differences of Christians," but still they see that there *are* differences substantial enough to separate us, and which sometimes lead us to mutual anathemas. "Do Protestants," they will ask, "only differ on secondary points from the Church of Rome? If so, what mean the pamphlets and philippics of Exeter Hall? If there is no radical and deep-seated difference, again (so they will say), between Chapel and Church, why did the Chapel split off from the Church, and why cannot you now make common cause and pray and work together?" In fact, he will see that the only Christians who are generally agreed are precisely those who have no creed to agree or differ about, except the one doctrine of "conversion" or "assurance," and that *their* agreement only results from "making a solitude and calling it a peace"—from practically ignoring all the teachings of Christianity but one. No, it will be clear to him either that the differences of Christians are radical, or that it is a disgrace to them (their differences being insignificant) that there should be any divisions at all. But,

II. *The divisions of Christians impair their energies and seriously hinder their work.* For if union is strength, then division must be a source of weakness. Of weakness, because Christians cannot unite their forces and make a combined assault on the enemy; because they will constantly be tempted to try their weapons, as they have done in the past, upon each other, instead of the common foe; because the maintenance of so many separate altars, organisations, and officers, quite apart from the envy and rivalry and bitterness which it is sure to breed,[1] must necessarily involve a prodigious

[1] "They breed in all a miserable sectarianism, than which nothing is more inimical to the spirit of Christianity. Each minute fragment shouts 'The Temple of the Lord are we,' and declares the claims of all others to be inferior, if not false. Zeal for the denomination or for 'the interest' takes the place of zeal for Christ. . . . I am persuaded that much of the bitterness and narrowness of soul complained of in our country churches is owing to these unchristian rivalries."—*Congregational Year Book*, 1871.

CHAP. II.

waste of power. It is no secret that in many a town and village the very meagre congregations now occupying four or five sanctuaries could easily be collected into one or two, thus liberating both men and money for the work of GOD elsewhere. And it must be remembered here that this waste is not confined to England. The Bishop of Ballarat has recently stated that in Australia "in almost every township there are at least five separate houses of prayer, where five very scanty congregations assemble, and are ministered to by five underpaid ministers, who ride on five underfed horses to preach what is substantially the same gospel." "The waste of time and energy," he adds, "is something enormous, and the positive moral mischief cannot be exaggerated." Similarly, the Bishop of Melbourne tells us that in the Australian bush, "where one minister could do all well, and could be well supported, there are many ministers badly paid," and positively reduced to "watching how they may steal from one another's flocks;" whilst the late Primate of Australia, Dr. Barry, has solemnly testified that "the Christianity of our outpost settlements is simply being destroyed by our divisions." No wonder that our charities languish and our missions are starved whilst we thus fritter away our resources. Yet we go on complacently year after year propping up these separate "causes," whilst Macedonia with its millions cries out in vain for our help. Here is a pathetic cry from China:—"This morning I climbed a hill and looked down upon—*a heathen city!* Yes, here, at the close of the nineteenth century, is a beautiful, busy city, thronging with civilised, intelligent people, knowing precisely as much to-day of the one true GOD as the Britons did in the days of Boadicea. . . . And it is but one of *the thousands of cities in the world of which the same may be said.* . . . But CHRIST'S servants stay, crowded together in one little spot of the earth's surface, often treading upon each other's toes, working (sometimes deliberately) not so much against Satan as against each other: the filling of one church meaning the

The Guardian, June 12, 1889.

The Guardian, July 3, 1889.

emptying of another, the success of one worker the disappointment of another. And all the time, millions of our fellow-creatures, for the lack of something better, are ignorantly worshipping stocks and stones."[1] Does any one say, "But we have sent some missionaries to China"? I answer, "Yes, indeed! There are *forty different Protestant societies*[2] at the present moment working, with scarcely an exception, independently of each other, sometimes in opposition to each other, for the evangelization of the Celestials." How Satan must laugh in his sleeve! How cleverly he has set brother against brother, and all in the name of religion! No, we do not need to ask why, with all our multiplied agencies, we make so little headway against the powers of evil. A missionary in India, Mr. Bowen, a Congregationalist, has confessed that he preached every week, from the doorstep of his chapel, for twenty-five years, without, so far as he knew, making a single convert,[3] and on all hands, from Canon Taylor, from Mr. Caine. from Dr. Lunn, we hear of the comparative sterility of our missions. I venture to think that, considering our divisions, their success has been surprising, for our force is lost in friction. The church of GOD is often compared to an army, and it is a favourite simile with Nonconformists to liken the various denominations to so many regiments. But what a rope of sand would an army be, the regiments of which held little or no communication, recognised no common orders or officers, had no common plan of campaign, but fought each for his own hand! Such an undisciplined horde could only court defeat. "If you ever hope for one gleam of success in India," says a writer in *Fraser's Magazine*, "you must either settle your differences at home, or draw lots for the possession of the field." And a writer in the *Indian Methodist Times* is on the right track when he asks

See Note 1, p. 15.

See Note 2, p. 15.

[1] Rev. J. H. Horsburgh in the *C. M. S. Gleaner.*
[2] Dr. A. Williamson in *The Chinese Recorder.*
[3] Curteis, p. 18, note.

CHAP. II.

whether the resources now wasted "in the trivial rivalries of separated Methodist societies are never to be available for missionary enterprise"? Not that re-union among Methodists would be more than a drop in the bucket. There must be re-union amongst *all* Christians if the church of GOD is to discharge her mission with success.

III. *The divisions of Christians do incalculable harm by bringing Christianity into contempt.* For the world, or the observant and inquiring part of it, knows perfectly well that many of these same divisions had their origin in temper, pride, or self-will, and owe their continuance to bigotry, jealousy, and obstinacy. Take, for example, the many splits amongst the followers of John Wesley. Is there any sober and unprejudiced person who will aver that any one of these had sufficient warrant; that one of them can be justified to the church's Head? Why, the "Bible Christians" allow that they had their beginning in O'Bryan's impatience of control, his disregard of rules, his claiming to be a law to himself.[1] The "Primitives" separated over the question of camp-meetings, which the Conference disallowed, and, to pass over the rest, the "Wesleyan Reformers," the latest of these secessions, owes its being to a bitter and acrimonious dispute—to the fly-sheets of Messrs. Everett, Dunn, and Griffiths. It is often said, as if it were matter for congratulation, that these splits involved no doctrinal differences; that they were entirely about minor questions of order and polity. But could a more damaging impeachment be made than that men calling themselves Christians should stand apart, should refuse to hold communion with one another any longer, over *mere points of decency and order?* And as with their inception, so with their continuation. Of course the vested interests which have arisen have had something

[1] "Owing to disagreement with the Wesleyans, through the irregularity of his methods, he severed himself from them, and formed a new denomination."—*Rev. H. W. Horwill (Bible Christian), in the "British Weekly."*

to do with the maintenance of these bodies, but the spirit of strife and jealousy has also prolonged their existence. It is well known that a munificent benefactor of the Kirk of Scotland—I cite this merely as an illustration of the spirit of rivalry—confessed that he had given his half million merely "to spite thae Frees." A traveller in the United States was much struck by the numerous places of worship which he found in some little town. "You seem to have a good deal of religion in this place," he remarked to one of the inhabitants. "Well, I don't know about that, stranger," was the reply, "but we have a good deal of *rivalry*." Yes, that is what it comes to, and the world knows this: it knows that it is largely *unchristian tempers that keep Christians apart*, and it has no scorn too lofty for these pitiful dissensions, no contempt too sublime for these "trivial rivalries." And so, to our shame be it spoken, the world has come to loathe the very name of religion—the religion of charity and peace!—and our CHRIST is daily wounded in the house of His friends, and His unspotted name is blasphemed among the Gentiles; and "our unhappy divisions," so long as they last, forbid us to expect it otherwise.

Note 1. Even in the Congo State, though it is only just opened to the preaching of Christianity, there are already *nine* societies, including Romanist, Baptist, and Plymouth Brethren, in the field.

Note 2. The *C. M. S. Intelligencer* for May 1890 shows how our divisions work in India: "A simple Indian Christian . . . may on two successive days be surprised, on the one hand by being told that he has done wrong in bringing his young child to be baptized, and on the other by hearing ascribed to baptism a virtue which seems to him quite magical; and possibly on the third day he may be more surprised still by being assured that baptism is superfluous."

CHAPTER III.

IS SEPARATION SINFUL?—THE CHURCH BEFORE CHRIST.

"The church takes its origin not in the will of man, but in the will of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. . . . Men sometimes speak as if the New Testament laid down no doctrine concerning the church at all. It is the body of which CHRIST is the Head, and this is made into so mere a figure, that it seems as if people supposed that simply by their own uniting they could demand that the LORD should be their Head. In the New Testament the church flows out from the LORD, not flows into Him."—*Bishop Temple.*

ARE the divisions of Christians, as they exist amongst ourselves, are they, or are they not, *sinful?* Is this state of things, with its 226 sects, or is it not, according to the will of GOD, as revealed in the Old and New Testaments? Did He, or did He not, intend His Church to be—not "one body," but—a hundred or two hundred different bodies, one bearing the name of "Baptist," another the name of "Wesleyan," a third the name of "Methodist New Connexion," and so forth?—this is the question which we have now to consider.

But that question really amounts to this:—*Can any man or men make a church?* Can churches be founded at the pleasure or caprice of any individual, however eminent or devoted, or of any body of men, however earnest and single-minded? Could Calvin, clever as he was, could Luther, could Wesley, could O'Bryan, found a new church? Can a church be started, as I learn from the newspapers has been done at St. Ives, in Cornwall, on *teetotal principles?* In other words, is a church a mere *voluntary* organisation, a purely *human*

society, which any man can start at his discretion (or indiscretion), or is it a supernatural society, an organisation "whose builder and maker is GOD"? See Note 1, p. 21.

We are now speaking exclusively, be it observed, of the *visible* church (not that Scripture ever mentions an *invisible* church; not that it recognises any church which is *not* visible); we are treating of that body, or these bodies, of professing Christians which can be seen and known of all men. The so-called "Wesleyan Church" is a visible body; the "Free Church of Scotland" is a visible body. Well, was it, and is it, the will of GOD that His universal "church" should be "one body," acknowledging "one LORD," professing "one faith," receiving "one baptism," or is it the will of GOD that that church should consist of two, or ten, or two hundred separate and distinct bodies, acknowledging "one LORD," it may be, but professing different faiths, having different organisations, ranged under different kinds of pastors, called by different names, and sometimes recognising no baptism at all? Which is it?

Now, in trying to answer this question, there is but one authority to which we shall *all* defer, viz., the authority of Holy Scripture. I make little or no appeal in this volume to the voice of Christian antiquity, to the testimony of the fathers or early writers. Not because I do not think such testimony to be most valuable, and weighty, and instructive, but because, unhappily, it counts for very little with those for whom I write: though they got their Bible through the church, as a rule they will listen to the Bible only. "The Bible, the Bible only," is said to be "the religion of Protestants." To the Bible therefore we will go; "to the law and to the testimony" we will turn. In the present chapter, however, we must confine our inquiries to the Old Testament. See Note 2, p. 21.

For the first thing I notice about the church, as described in the Bible, is this, that there was *a church*—a visible church—*before Christ*, in Old Testament times. We commonly call it "the Jewish church," by way of

CHAP. III. distinguishing it from the "Christian," but the Bible (as we shall see presently) knows of no such distinction. It only recognises "the church" or "the congregation," whether before CHRIST or after it; "one body," one unbroken and continuous society, whether under the law or under the gospel. What, then, let us ask, was the church *before Christ* like—"the church in the wilderness," as St. Stephen calls it? Was this *one* body or many? Could any man or men found a new church in those days? Was there then *one* "people of God" or one hundred?

Ephes. ii. 12-18; iii. 6.
Acts vii. 38.

To this question only one answer can be given. There was *one* "people of God," *one* "congregation," *one* "body," and no more—the body which practically consisted of one race—the Jewish; the body into which all men, whether Jews or proselytes from the Gentiles, were admitted by circumcision; the people whose rites, institutions, history are described in the Old Testament. This was, until CHRIST came, the visible church of GOD, and that it was but one body has never been questioned. No doubt there were sects and parties amongst the Jews, such as the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the Essenes, &c., but no one has ever suggested that there were two Jewish churches, two (or two hundred) "congregations" or "peoples" of the LORD. To this "one body" all circumcised Jews, good, bad, and indifferent, belonged.

And yet attempts were made more than once to set up rival communions, separate sectarian bodies, with their own priests, altars, and sacrifices. The first dissension was that of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Here was a deliberate attempt at division, and, like so many schisms, it had its origin in impatience of control, in lust of power, in usurpation of authority. But we know what GOD thought of it. The earthquake and the fire destroyed those first schismatics, and thus "the church in the wilderness" remained one. The next attempt was somewhat more successful. The founder of the first sect was no less a person than the very grandson of Moses himself. Probably through pique, through dis-

Numb. xvi.

appointment, through mortification at seeing others preferred before himself—the fruitful source of other and later schisms—Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Moses,[1] set up a Nonconforming altar at Dan in the extreme north of Palestine, and there the separatist worship lasted "until the day of the captivity of the land." But for all that, no one has ever said, ever thought, that there were two Jewish "churches." Not even the grandson of the legislator could start a second Hebrew church or congregation.

Judg. xviii. 30.

It was by the astutest of Israel's kings, however, the diplomatic Jeroboam, that the *great* schism in the ancient church was brought about. To strengthen his position (as he thought), he erected new altars, consecrated new priests, appointed a new festival—in fact, he made an actual separation, religious as well as political, between Israel and Judah, an actual *breach* in the church of GOD. But the Bible never recognises two churches, two covenant peoples, notwithstanding. The "sin of Jeroboam" is condemned over and over again.[2] It brought about the ruin of his house and the destruction of his people. Separation in that day, consequently—for schism, not idolatry, was the sin of Jeroboam—was unmistakably sinful. His "calves" were but visible symbols, copied from the cherubim in Solomon's temple. So far from starting the worship of *idols,* Jeroboam kept as close to the old religion as he could. But he made a schism, a split in the ancient church of GOD, and it is this which is so repeatedly condemned. In that age it was clearly the will of GOD that there should be "one body," one altar, one priesthood, one centre of unity, and no more.

1 Kings xii. 26–33

1 Kings xiii. 33, 34; xv. 29. xiv. 16.

But here it is essential to notice that Jeroboam's success—for he *did* succeed in carrying ten out of the twelve tribes along with him in his schism, in his separation

[1] The Authorised Version reads "Manasseh," but the Revised Version gives the true reading, "Moses."

[2] The sin of Jeroboam is mentioned with reproof over twenty times in the Old Testament.

CHAP. III. from the religious polity established by GOD Himself at Jerusalem; he did succeed in setting up rival altars at Bethel and at Dan; he did find priests—he consecrated them himself—to serve these altars; this success, I say, did not replace the one congregation and people of the LORD by two. The ten tribes did not cease to be Jews. They were still brought by circumcision into covenant with GOD; they are still addressed as His chosen people. Their priests are never recognised as the priests of GOD; their ministrations are always stigmatised as illegitimate; but the people, being Jews and being circumcised, are still accounted the elect or chosen people of GOD, are always recognised as belonging to the one body. Wide as was the breach which Jeroboam made, it did not split the "commonwealth of Israel" into two. He sinned grievously himself, and he "made Israel to sin"—in fact, it is beyond all doubt that separation in that age was wholly sinful. But, notwithstanding the schism, the Jewish church remained one. Not even Jeroboam, the great heresiarch, who carried five-sixths of the congregation of Israel along with him—Jeroboam, whom *God appointed* to rule over ten tribes, could found a new church or people of GOD.

1 Kings xiv. 7; xvi. 2, &c.

1 Kings xiii. 34; 2 Kings xvii. 21, &c.

And when, later on, the ten tribes, as the punishment of their apostasies, were transported to Assyria, and there were gradually absorbed among the heathen, or, anyhow, disappeared from the page of history, the elect people of GOD, as represented by Judah, still lived on and still continued one. That people was often rebellious, often idolatrous. The prophets call it a "sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers;" but it did not cease on that account to be the church and children of GOD. Nor did the few faithful and devout souls left among them on that account think it their duty to "come out from the midst of them" and to set up new sects. The pious of those days did not dream of starting new churches because the church of GOD was so impure. And so it was that when our LORD CHRIST came to this planet, He found one church, one

Isa. i. 4.

Ver. 2; Rom. x. 21.

"commonwealth of Israel," established in the land. There had been, as we have seen, several "schisms in the body," but these had "had their day and ceased to be." The separatist bodies somehow seemed to lack continuance. The gates of hell prevailed against them. Separation had always been sinful, because it was a departure from GOD'S plan of "one Lord," one faith, one altar; because it presumed to improve on GOD'S plan. It had been sinful, even when the church was steeped in wickedness; even when separation seemed to be crowned with success. But it brought with it, as sin always does sooner or later, its own recompense, and the captivity swallowed up the schismatics as the earth had done before; and so it came to pass that, when CHRIST came, no man, or body of men, had succeeded in setting up any other church than the one "church of the living GOD, the pillar and ground of the truth." CHAP. III. Judg. xviii. 30. Numb. xvi. 32.

In the next chapter we shall see how this bears on the church of the New Covenant.

Note 1. Dr. Fairbairn has touched the heart of the question when he says that the church is "not an inspiration of GOD, but an institution of man."—*Contemporary Review*, April 1890. He does not tell us how this can agree with (say) St. Matt. xvi. 18; Eph. v. 23, 25; Acts xx. 28; Col. i. 18, &c. Nor would he say that the Old Testament church was "not an inspiration of God."

Note 2. "Our LORD did not first have the Bible written and then sent forth His Apostles to lecture upon it. He sent forth His church; He made the church, He inspired His church, and that part of the Bible which is most precious to us came afterwards. He sent forth men to do the work. The New Testament was the great instrument by which they were to do it, but the church that He created was the agent to use that instrument; and it is to invert altogether the order of instruction which the LORD has given us, if we suppose that the instrument is to do the work by itself."—Bishop Temple, *Address to Lond. Dio. Conference*, April 22, 1890.

"The difficulty of appealing to the New Testament and ignoring the church altogether lies in the historic fact that the canon of the New Testament was settled by church authority."—*Guardian*, June 13, 1888.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHURCH AFTER CHRIST.

"This visible church . . . is but one, continued from the first beginning of the world to the last end. Which company is divided into two moieties, the one before, the other since, the coming of CHRIST."—*Hooker.*

DOES the New Testament, unlike the Old, warrant the belief that any man can found a new church? Do the Gospels and Epistles, unlike the law and the prophets, represent the church as composed, or meant to be composed, not of "one body," but of two hundred separate and independent "bodies"?—this is the question which next presents itself for discussion.

We have seen that the church in Old Testament times, the so-called "Jewish church"—for the Hebrew race, brought into covenant with GOD by circumcision, was the "church" of the Old Testament: it is generally called "the congregation" in Holy Scripture, but *congregation* and *church* mean one and the same thing (Compare Ps. xxii. 22 with Heb. ii. 12. That "congregation" means not only a particular assembly, but the whole body of Israelites, Exod. xii. 19, Numb. xvi. 3, xxvii. 17, and many other passages will prove) — we have seen that this church was one and indivisible. We have seen that men could and did create *breaches, schisms,* and *divisions* in that church; we have observed that they formed *sects* and *parties* within it, but that they could found another "people," or that GOD could approve of rival "congregations," never enters into our wildest dreams. That people, that congregation, was GOD'S—GOD chose, constituted, maintained, governed it.

It was a Divine, not a merely human society, and it was altogether beyond man's power to found a second.

"But what has all this to do," some of you will ask, "with the church and religion of CHRIST? We are under Christianity, not Judaism. The law is one thing, the gospel is another."

It has this to do, that the "body" or community or church which existed under the law did not end with the law, but was continued under the gospel; that the so-called "Jewish" and "Christian" churches are but two names for *one and the same body* at different periods of its history and under different dispensations, and therefore that if we find that body by GOD's decree one and indivisible at the earlier, we shall find it one and indivisible at the later period of its unbroken life.

And it has also this to do with it, that even if the "church" of the New Testament is *not* the continuation in any sense of the "congregation" of the Old Testament, but is a brand-new body, still the GOD who appointed "church" and "congregation" alike, who was the author and finisher of Judaism, no less than of Christianity, does not and cannot change, and that therefore the *principles* which underlie the Old Testament must have still guided and governed Him in New Testament days. So that if the congregation of Israel was a *Divine* society, a *visible* society, a society *one and indivisible*, the church of CHRIST will infallibly preserve the same marks and outlines. It will differ in *details*, being under a different dispensation. For example, it will not be a local, but a Catholic church; not composed of Jews only, but of all nations; not looking forward to a Messiah, but looking back to a Redeemer; but its constitution will not and cannot reverse *one principle* of GOD's ancient polity; it will not, for example, be an *invisible* body, or a purely *human* institution, nor can it be composed of *one hundred* different and conflicting bodies instead of one.

But now, what reasons have we for thinking that the church after CHRIST is but the continuation of the

CHAP. IV.

church before CHRIST. We have these at least. First, the continuity of *name*. It was "the church" in the wilderness; it was still "the church" that met in Jerusalem. The "Israel" of the Old Testament is succeeded by the "Israel of GOD" in the New. Second, the continuity of *feature and character*. The congregation of Israel was a "kingdom of priests," a "holy nation." The church of CHRIST is an "elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation," *i.e.*, the words used of the former are applied without hesitation to the latter. The one was, the other is, GOD's "people." Third, express statement. In St. John x. 16 we are told that CHRIST's "other sheep, not of this fold," *i.e.*, Gentiles, are to become "one flock"[1] with the Jewish disciples. In Rom. xi. 17–24, Gentile converts to Christianity are represented as "*grafted* into a good olive tree," as growing on a "holy *root*," as partaking of the life and "fatness of the olive tree"—the root, the tree, being "Israel," the ancient church and people of GOD. In Eph. ii. 12, Gentile Christians are represented as no longer "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel," or "strangers from the covenants of the promise." In verse 14 "both" (*i.e.*, Jew and Gentile) are said to be "made *one*;" in verse 16 "both" are said to be "reconciled in one body;" in verse 19 these same Gentile converts are described as "fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of GOD;" in chapter iii. 6, Christian Gentiles—and this at any rate is clear and conclusive—are said to be "fellow-heirs (*i.e.*, with the Jews) and *fellow-members* of the body." For as GOD "hath not cast away His people," the Jews, and as the body is always described as *one*—"one body," "one flock"—it follows that the Christian church is but the continuation, the expansion, the reconstitution, "upon better promises" of the Jewish commonwealth.

Acts vii. 38. Acts viii. 1–3. Gal. vi. 16. Exod. xix. 6. 1 Peter ii. 9. Rom. ix. 24–26; 2 Cor. vi. 16.

And if there is this continuity (or anything like it) in the church—and it is only what we should expect of

[1] The citations are all from the Revised Version.

Him with whom "there is no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning," of Him who does nothing by leaps and bounds,[1] either in the kingdom of nature or in that of grace, then it is perfectly inconceivable that the church before CHRIST being "one body," the same church after CHRIST should consist of two hundred "bodies"—a Baptist "body," a Wesleyan "body," and so forth. It is inconceivable that GOD can have so far changed His plans, His fundamental principles, as that union can have given place to division, and solidarity to separation. It is inconceivable that the one church can have become a congeries of a hundred and one churches. CHAP. IV. James i. 17

And this is equally inconceivable, let me repeat here, even if this argument (for the continuity of the Jewish and Christian churches) should not carry conviction, but should be completely disproved. For even if an entirely *new* society was founded on the day of Pentecost, still we cannot suppose that this new body would utterly contradict, in its constitution and essence, all the principles of the former body. It seems to be the belief of many Christians that Christ *changed everything ;* that Christianity can have nothing in common with Judaism. But is GOD a "man that He should lie, or the son of man that He should repent"? He is allowed to be equally the author of Judaism and of Christianity. The latter dispensation is no more Divine than the former was. It was GOD who spake in old time by the prophets, just as certainly as He has spoken to us by His Son. Well, has He changed His mind? Has He altered all His plans? Has He repudiated in these days the principles upon which He proceeded in those? Our Lord said it was not so. He proclaimed that His mission was "not to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfil." He declared that neither jot nor tittle should in any wise pass away from the law, until all things were accomplished. His sentence was "They have Heb. i. 1 St. Matt. v. 17. Ver. 18.

1 "Dieu n'agit pas par des volontés particulières."—*Malebranche.*

CHAP. IV. Moses and the prophets, let them hear them." There have been few sources of error more fruitful than this—the constant forgetting that Christianity is not a brand-new religion, but is built on the foundations of Judaism; the overlooking that our Bible contains an *Old* Testament as well as a New.

St. Luke xvi. 29.

But it may possibly be objected that all this is mere inference. Be it so. Then let us see what the New Testament says expressly as to the *oneness* of the visible church. Let us see whether it lends any countenance to the idea that Luther or Calvin or Wesley, or a body of teetotalers, could found a visible church of CHRIST.

But first let us be clear as to what we understand by the word "body." I understand by it precisely what my Nonconforming brethren understand by the word when they use it themselves. They understand by the natural "body" the entire human frame, with all its members, whether sound or diseased. They understand by the "Wesleyan body" the visible and actual society of Wesleyans; they do not understand good Wesleyans or converted Wesleyans only, but *all* the members of that communion, all who fulfil the conditions of membership in the Wesleyan Methodist Society. By the "Baptist body," again, they understand the corporation or community of Baptists, intelligent or unintelligent, spiritual or carnal—all, in fact, who belong to one or other of the various Baptist "churches" or congregations. They do not understand in either case a secret spiritual society, known only to GOD, and composed exclusively of "the saints of the Most High." They know that it is of the essence of a "body" to be one, and also to be visible and tangible. They can tell you in a moment who is and who is not a member. They never dream of using the word of any invisible society, *except when it occurs in Holy Scripture.* But surely a "body" must mean the same thing in Scripture and out of it.[1]

[1] The Church is called Christ's "*mystical* body" to distinguish it from His *natural* body; not to suggest that this "body" is or can be, invisible.

A "body" cannot be at once a distinguishable and an indistinguishable community. I assume therefore that the word "body," as used of Christians in the New Testament, embraces the *whole visible* church, including all its members, good and bad, and I hold that to restrict it to good members only is to play fast and loose with Scripture, and is unwittingly to "handle the word of GOD deceitfully." And I am confirmed in this view, nay, I am reduced to it, by recollecting that neither the Greek word σῶμα nor the Latin word *corpus* — the words St. Paul would have in his mind when he wrote about the "body" of CHRIST—could possibly be used except of a material or physical body, or of a corporation or sodality of persons. In Rome, where St. Paul wrote, *corpora*, or guilds of artisans and craftsmen abounded—all of them visible societies. He could not use the word, therefore, of an invisible community without overthrowing its proper meaning. To his readers it would convey the idea of of a visible corporation.[1]

See Gore *Christian Ministry*, pp. 31-35.

But what does Scripture say about this body or community of Christians? It says that we Christians, "who are many," are *one body* in CHRIST." It says that "we who are many are one bread, *one body*." It says that just as "*the body is one* and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are *one body*, so also is CHRIST." It teaches that when men are baptized they are "baptized by *one Spirit into one body*." Again, in verses 20 and 25, it testifies to the oneness of the body, whilst in verse 27 it says of the Corinthians to whom St. Paul wrote—some of whom, be it remembered, were "carnal," some "puffed up," some absolutely "fornicators"—"Ye are the body of CHRIST, and severally members thereof." Similarly, in Ephes. i. 23, "the church"—which yet needed to be solemnly warned against fornication, uncleanness, and drunkenness—is defined as "His body." This body is also identified with "the church"—a church which, we learn, was very

Rom. xii. 5. 1 Cor. x. 17. Chap. xii. 12. Ver. 13. 1 Cor. iii. 3. Chap. iv. 18. Chap. v. 1. Eph. v. 3, 18.

[1] See Dictionary of Christian Antiquities, art. "Body."

CHAP. IV far from perfect—in Col. i. 18, 24. In Eph. ii. 14, 16, Gentile and Jewish Christians, widely as they differed, are yet said to be "made both *one*" and "*one body*." In chapter iv. 4, Scripture teaches us that just as "there is one Spirit," so there is "*one body*"—and the very terms body and spirit imply that the former is visible, just as the latter is invisible—"one body," just as there is "one LORD, one faith, one baptism, one GOD and Father of all." Strange that men should tenaciously hold the "one LORD," "one faith," "one Spirit," and still persist in maintaining not one, but two hundred and one different "bodies"! It teaches—as if the truth needed constant repetition—the *oneness* of the body again in verses 12 and 16; in chapter v. 23, and in Col. i. 18, and ii. 19—"*the* body," not the 226 bodies. In fact, nothing can be clearer, nothing more indisputable than this, that the New Testament Scriptures with one voice proclaim that the body of Christians or the church (like the body of Jews, or like the human body of CHRIST, to which it is compared [1]) was one and is one, and that therefore no man or body of men can by any means found a second.

Col. iii. 5, 6.

Comp. 1 Cor. xii. 13.

It will still be said, however, that this one body is an *invisible* body, the whole company of converted people, and is composed of such alone. With this contention, therefore, I hope to deal further in the next chapter.

[1] "From the oneness of His body which was slain results the oneness of His body which is sanctified."—Rev. F. Watson, *Lectures on Church Doctrine*, 1st Series.

"This body is necessarily outward and historical, and CHRIST instituted an outward rite for incorporation into it."—Bishop Westcott, *Report of Langham St. Conference*, p. 23.

CHAPTER V.

THE CHURCH A VISIBLE BODY.

'Had Moses and the prophets, CHRIST and the Apostles, only taught and by miracles proved religion to their contemporaries, . . . Christianity must have been in a great degree sunk and forgot in a few ages. To prevent this appears to have been one reason why a visible church was instituted, to be like a city upon a hill, a standing memorial to the world of the duty we owe our Maker."—*Bishop Butler, Analogy.*

Is "the church," of which so much is said in Holy Scripture—it is mentioned under one designation or another over one hundred times—"the church of the living GOD," "the church, which is His body,"—is it a visible and recognisable, or an invisible and non-corporate society? Is it a body which can be seen and known of men, a corporation which comprises all, both good and bad, who have been admitted as members; or is it a secret and indistinguishable company, consisting of converted people only, a company whose members can be known to GOD alone? Did our LORD, did His Apostles, bestow the name of "church" on that organised fellowship which took shape on the day of Pentecost, and to which members were visibly admitted by the rite of Baptism, or did they restrict it to those members of that body who alone were in vital union with CHRIST by faith?—this is the question which we have now to consider; and of all the questions which have arisen, or can arise, between Church and Chapel, this is the most important. The most important, because it is a "pivot question"—all, or nearly all, the rest turn on this; because it "lies below all the theological differences of the day;"[1]

[1] F. W. Robertson.

CHAP. V.

because, if we can only agree on this point, then there is great hope of our agreement on others; because, until this is settled, the need or desirability of re-union will never be fully recognised. No, we need not trouble our heads about re-union; disunion is all the same, if "the church" is an invisible company.[1] In that case pious Christians *must* belong to the one church, and all the rest are not of the church at all. What, then, let us ask, is the church?

See Note 1, p. 36.

Now the answer which most intelligent Nonconformists would give to that question will, I believe, be this: The word "church," when used of any local society of Christians, as (for example) the church at Jerusalem, or the church at Corinth or Colosse, must refer to a *visible* body; but when "*the* church" is spoken of generally, or it is spoken of as "the body," or the "body of CHRIST," or "the kingdom of heaven," then the *invisible* church is referred to. In other words, "*a* church" is a visible, "*the* church" an invisible company."[2] I can hardly be wrong in supposing that they would practically give this answer, because it is in perfect accord, not only with their public teaching, but with all their modes of thought and speech. Any Wesleyan, any Baptist, will tell you that the "Roman Church," or the "English Church," the "Kirk of Scotland," or the "Wesleyan body," whether in this particular town or village, or throughout the country at large, is each of them a *visible society*, an organic community, a corporate body, with its own laws, funds, officers, polity, &c.; but the same person will also stoutly maintain that "the church of CHRIST" or "the body of CHRIST" is nothing like this, but is a secret and invisible company, composed of all true believers (and of these alone) throughout the world.[3]

[1] "Until Churchmen can convince Dissenters that unity is the true ideal for the Church, nearly all the work will remain to be done."

[2] This is the distinction drawn by a late learned Nonconformist writer, Dr. W. Lindsay Alexander, *Anglo-Catholicism*, p. 137.

[3] The learned Professor Milligan says this is by no means the Presbyterian view. He affirms that their idea of the Church is

That English Churchmen, in common with the great bulk of Christians of the present time, as well as of the past ages, have a very different conception of "the church" need hardly be said. Their view is that the terms "church," "the body of CHRIST," "the kingdom of heaven," mean one and the same thing; that thing being the "congregation" or company of professed Christians, the society or "body" of disciples, comprising both good and bad, both saint and sinner. They believe, in fact, that the whole church is just like any part thereof, in town, or village, or country. They believe that the whole church is a body, like any so-called "Baptist Church" or "Wesleyan Church;" a visible society, containing some true and some false Christians; a corporation with its organisation, officers, &c.; a body that can be seen and known; a community, in fact, the members of which are members, not because they are pious, not because their secret hearts are right with GOD, but because they have been *outwardly and visibly admitted to membership*, and are to all outward appearance members still. CHAP. V

Which of these views is in accordance with Holy Scripture? They cannot both be right—one at least must be wrong.

I submit, then, first, that it is a mistake to speak of an "invisible" church at all. It is a mistake, because these distinctions of "visible" and "invisible" are entirely of man's invention. They have no sort of warrant in the Word of GOD. It is allowed that there is no mention whatever of an "invisible church" in Scripture —if there is, let the passage be produced; and it is equally certain that there would have been some mention of it had such a thing been known to, or contemplated by, our LORD and His Apostles. For if we are to under- See Note 2, p. 36.

that of "a *visible and organised body*, within which Christ rules by means of a ministry, sacraments, and ordinances, to which He has attached a blessing, the fulness of which we have no right to look for except through the channels which He has ordained."—*The Expositor*, July 1888. This is all a Churchman could desire.

CHAP. V.

stand the word "church" in one sense here, of a visible body, and in an *opposite* sense there, of an invisible body, assuredly some word would have been said to put us on our guard. But no such word was spoken; no such conception (so far as we can trace) entered the minds of those who penned the New Testament. This is, as we have seen, a vital question—one on which a score of other questions turn. It accounts for half the differences of belief between Church and Chapel. And yet the "invisible church" has not a single text to support it. Is it right, then, for us to *make texts?* Is it not wrong for us, in order to meet some supposed difficulty, to put opposite meanings on one and the same word, without any hint or warrant from the word of GOD?

Of course it is admitted—all thoughtful persons must know this—that in the visible church only *some*, possibly a comparatively small portion, of the members are devout Christians, and only some, possibly but "few," will be saved. This inner circle, if we may so call it, of true believers has been named, for convenience, the "soul of the church,"[1] for it is its essential and blessed part, and for its sake principally the church was founded and is maintained; but to designate it a "church" is to mislead men; it is to make confusion worse confounded. Why, it has none of the marks or attributes of a church, for the word "church" means "congregation," "assembly," "gathering."[2] The pious souls found here and there in the visible church have no

[1] "*They* [too] are members of the soul of the Church who, not being members of the visible communion and society, know not that, in not becoming members of it, they are rejecting the commands of CHRIST, to whom in faith and love and by obedience they cleave. And they, being members of the *body* or visible communion of the Church, are not members of the *soul* of the Church who, amid outward profession of the faith, do in heart or deeds deny Him whom in words they confess."—*Pusey, Comm. Joel*, ii. 32.

[2] The word *ecclesia*, the word translated "church" in the New Testament, was used of the *public assemblies* of the Greeks, called together by the town-crier, and is the word used of the tumultuous "assembly" at Ephesus in Acts xix. 32, 41.

"assembly," they form no "congregation," they have no sort of organisation—in no respect whatever do they resemble the human body and its members. Moreover, to designate the devout believers in the church an "invisible church" is to usurp the name which, if it may be used at all, belongs to *another* company, namely, those departed members of the church who have passed into the unseen world. They are still a part of the church, for death cannot terminate their membership, and as they are hidden from human gaze it is perhaps permissible to call *them* the "invisible church." But to fasten that name on any company of living men simply because of their piety, is contrary to Scripture, is opposed to the very idea of a "church," and is to open the door to endless errors and misbeliefs. CHAP. V. 1 Cor. xii.

And I further submit, in the second place, that it is equally wrong, because equally arbitrary and unscriptural, to distinguish between *a* "church" and *the* "church;" to say that "a church" must be, and "the church" cannot be a visible body. At any rate, it is such a nice, not to say artificial, distinction—one so unlikely to occur to most men—that if it really does exist we shall surely have some trace of it in Holy Writ. But does it exist? Let us examine a few passages. In Matt. xviii. 17 we read, "Tell it unto the church. And if he refuse to hear the church." Is "the church" here, can it be, an invisible body? It may be said—it is said by Dr. Alexander—that "*the* church" here must necessarily mean *a* local church, because no man can possibly tell anything to the church universal. But even admitting this, we must remark that the distinction breaks down at once—you now say that "*the* church" means "*a* church"—and further, that the church in *every place* cannot be wholly and entirely different from the church in *one place*. Again, in Acts xx. 28, St. Paul charges the "elders of the church" at Ephesus to "feed the church of God." Is it conceivable that in ver. 17 "church" means a visible, and in ver. 28 an invisible body?—that the same word is used within the compass of a few Ver. 17.

CHAP. V.

verses to express two entirely different ideas? From 1 Cor. i. 2 we learn that a local church, and *that* a church full of impurities, is nevertheless "the church of GOD." In chap. x. 32 we read, "Give no occasion of stumbling either to Jews . . . . or to the church of GOD." Was it pious souls (the so-called "invisible church") who alone were to be considered? was it not rather the body known to Jews and Gentiles as "the church"? In xii. 28, "GOD hath set some in the church, first apostles," &c. Is "the church" here the invisible company of true saints, or is it the visible society of Christians throughout the world? Obviously the latter, for its visible officers are referred to. In xv. 9 St. Paul says, "I persecuted the church of GOD." Was it only the very elect, or was it the people called Christians? and is the "church of GOD" a visible company? Once more: in 1 Tim. iii. 15 we read: "That thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of GOD, which is the church of the living GOD, the pillar and ground of the truth." If the "church of the living GOD" is an invisible company, how can men recognise it and behave themselves before it? In fact, to maintain this distinction lands us in a tissue of absurdities, and it would never have been suggested but for the difficulty created by Calvinistic theology—and, we may add, by the divisions of Christians—the difficulty of recognising in the church as it exists, with its manifold errors, sins, and sects, anything at all resembling what "the church of the living GOD" ought to be. It is nothing but the pitiable state of the church and the miserable lives of some of its members that has suggested to devout minds the fiction of an "invisible church." No; *a* church can only be the company of Christians in one place; *the* church, the company of Christians in every place.

Comp. 2 Cor. i. 1.

Comp. Acts ix. 2, "Any that were of the way."

So far we have dealt exclusively with the word "church" as it is brought before us in Holy Scripture. But that community, as we have already seen, is there called by another name, viz., the "body of CHRIST," and I now submit that, for the reasons (among others)

1 Cor. xii. 27; Eph. i. 23, iv. 12; Col. i. 24, &c.

alleged in the last chapter, it is impossible to identify this "body of CHRIST" with any invisible company. I say, again, that it is of the very essence of a "body," or at least of a body which is expressly compared to the human body, to be visible and organic. But here an objection must be met. It is admitted (we are told) that the church's Head, the LORD JESUS CHRIST, is invisible; why should not the members be invisible also? To this we reply: Some of the members, like the Head, *are* invisible. All the saints in paradise are invisible. But then we are speaking all the time of the *church on earth;* we are not speaking of that part which is in the unseen world. We allow that the visible CHRIST has become invisible, as have the souls departed this life. But they were all visible—visible Head and visible members of the church—so long as they were in this planet. Moreover, the word "visible," which is not a Scripture term—though all Christians admit that Scripture reveals to us a church which is visible,—the word "visible" is altogether misconstrued in this objection. It does not mean "seen"—for millions of Christians are, and must be, unseen by us—but it means "recognisable" and "distinguishable" by objective marks. The visible church is not the handful of Christians that we can see with our eyes, but all men *who can be known or recognised* as Christians by the fact of their membership in the Christian church. All we contend for is that the members of the body on earth must be recognisable, just as the Head was and His disciples were whilst He was on the earth.

Nor may a further objection be passed over. "Do you deny," we shall be asked, "that this body is spiritual, supernatural? do you say that it is a *mere* visible society or community of men, like the Freemasons or the Foresters?" By no means. The members are linked to each other and to their Divine Head by spiritual and invisible bonds. But they are also connected by outward and visible signs and badges. They are "made disciples" by baptism, and are known as disciples, as

1 Cor. xii. 13; Eph. iv. 3.

St. Matt. xxviii. 19;

CHAP. V.

members of the body, by the "breaking of the bread," and by continuing in the apostolic doctrine and fellowship. The *mode* of their union with CHRIST and each other is mysterious and supernatural, but the *members* themselves—and it is of these we are treating—are human and visible. A society does not cease to be visible because it is founded, maintained, and interpenetrated by the Holy Spirit of GOD. The Freemasons, to revert to the comparison just made, do not cease to be visible because the mode of their initiation, or their sign, is a secret, nor yet because some Freemasons are bad men, and unworthy of the craft.

Acts ii. 41, viii. 12, xix. 5; Rom. vi. 3; 1 Cor. xii. 13. 1 Cor. x. 17. Acts ii. 42.

It still remains to consider another name by which the church is known, viz., the "kingdom of heaven;" but this must form the subject of a separate chapter.

Note 1. "The church, which is His body, consists of those who have passed from death to life. There can be but one such body."—Dr. Reynolds, *Langham St. Conference*, p. 37.

Note 2. "The distinction cannot be maintained, which was first introduced by the theology of the sixteenth century, between a visible and invisible church in this world, the latter consisting only of the truly godly. Not only is such a distinction uncountenanced by Scripture, but the very idea of a church is that of a society which has its officers and its organisation. It is a contradiction in terms to call a number of individuals a church who are not united together in a body. The moment they do begin to unite, by virtue of their common supposed characteristic of genuine godliness, they cease to be [illegible] invisible."—Stanton *Jewish and Christian Messiah*, p. 230, quoted in Gore's *Ministry of the Christian Church*, pp. 19, 20. "The idea of an invisible church to express the body of true believers who alone are the church, to whatever community they belong, so that the visible church becomes an unimportant thing, is an idea entirely at variance with Scripture and all pre-Reformation teaching. The phrase is first found in almost contemporary writings of Luther and of Zwingle: it is akin to the teaching of Hus and Wiclif."—Lock in *Lux Mundi*, p. 376.

CHAPTER VI.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

"The city of God was set up before the eyes of men. It was no unsubstantial city such as we fancy in the clouds, no invisible pattern such as Plato thought might be laid up in heaven, but a visible corporation, whose members met together to eat bread and drink wine, and into which they were initiated by bodily immersion in water."—*Ecce Homo.*

WHAT does Holy Scripture teach us about "the church" under its name of the "kingdom of heaven"?[1] for (as a late champion of Nonconformity testifies) "the church is the kingdom of heaven, and the kingdom of heaven is the church"[2]—this is the question now to be submitted to the candid and prayerful consideration of Churchmen and Nonconformists.

But it may be well if, before we enter upon it, we review for a moment our position. The question we have been anxiously debating—and debating, I hope, not with any idea of scoring a victory or of exhibiting the supposed errors of our fellow-Christians, but in the vital interests of peace and reconciliation (for until this question is settled there can be no real and lasting peace between Church and Chapel; the most we can do is to patch up a hollow truce),—the question on which we embarked in our third paper is this: "Is the church of GOD, and must it be, one, or may there be one hundred or two hundred separate churches?" or, in other words, "Can any man, or body of men, however learned and

[1] The church is spoken of as a kingdom thirty-six times in St. Matthew's Gospel.

[2] Dr. W. L. Alexander, *Anglo-Catholicism not Apostolical*, p. 151. But see p. 55.

CHAP. VI. devout, found a new and original church?" And so far we have seen—

1. That the church of GOD in Old Testament times was absolutely one and indivisible.

2. That the church of the New Testament, being but the continuation of the Jewish church "under better promises," or in any case being founded, shaped, and governed by the same unchanging GOD, must also be one and indivisible.

3. That the Christian "church," or "the body of CHRIST," is distinctly and repeatedly declared to be "one body," and that the idea of a "Wesleyan body," a "Baptist church," and the like is directly opposed to the express teachings of Holy Scripture.

But at this point the question presented itself: What is meant by the terms "the church" and "the body of CHRIST"? It is, of course, admitted that the *visible* church, the only church of which men can possibly know anything, the company of all those who "profess and call themselves Christians"—is not now to all appearance one body, one society. It is popularly believed, on the contrary, to consist of some two hundred or more diverse "bodies," which bodies are constantly spoken of (in terms for which Scripture supplies no warrant) as "the churches." But then it is contended that in Scripture the expressions "the church" and "the body of CHRIST" do not refer to the visible church at all, but to a so-called "invisible church," to an inscrutable body made up of all true believers in CHRIST, and of these alone. We were consequently compelled to examine the question (which goes to the root of this controversy, and accounts for nearly all our unhappy divisions): Is the "church of GOD," is "the body of CHRIST," visible or invisible? To this question the two preceding chapters have supplied a partial answer. That answer must now be completed by our carefully examining the declarations of Holy Scripture respecting the "kingdom of GOD," or the "kingdom of heaven," so far as they bear on the visibility or invisibility of the church.

And first among these stands the parable of the Tares —the first of the parables in which our LORD proclaims the character of His kingdom. It has been said[1] that, with one exception, a greater battle has been fought over the words "the field is *the world*" than over any single phrase in the Scripture. Yet there can now be no manner of doubt that our LORD is here speaking of the church which is to *cover the world*, as even Calvin allows. Why, the parable was not spoken about the world, but about the "kingdom of heaven." Its object is to explain *that* to men. We do not need to be informed that good and bad men will always be mixed (like wheat and tares) *in the world*. "It needs no ghost to tell us that," but it was very necessary to say this of the *church*, for it was just what the disciples would never have expected. Besides, "the field," when our LORD spoke, could only be called "the world." It was not the church until this seed was sown in it. It was this sowing of seed by the Son of Man that originated the Christian church. What, then, does our LORD here tell us the Church of GOD is like? Is it an invisible company, consisting of good men alone? In that case the field would produce wheat only. But it is represented, on the contrary, as yielding wheat *and tares*, the true children of the kingdom and the children of the wicked one. These are found side by side and all attempts to separate them, we are told, would be fruitless and mischievous. Our LORD cannot be speaking therefore of any "invisible church," for that company, we are all agreed—the "soul of the church," as we have called it—contains good men alone. No; "the kingdom of heaven" or "the church" here pourtrayed to us is clearly a visible church, in which, just as in the Jewish church, good and bad are found inextricably mixed together. Even "doers of iniquity" are in the kingdom.

St. Mark xvi. 15.

St. Matt. xiii. 37.

Ver. 41.

But still more clearly is this same lesson taught in the parable of the Draw-Net. The point of the parable

St. Matt. xiii. 47–50.

[1] By Archbishop Trench, *Notes on the Parables*, p. 83.

CHAP. VI. is that the net *gathered of every kind*—good fish and bad fish alike. It is just because it did gather bad, no less than good, that the net is here used to illustrate the nature of the kingdom of heaven. If it had collected good fish alone, our LORD implies that it would not have been like His Church, His kingdom, at all. And if the Church were an invisible body, consisting of good people only, the draw-net is the very last thing to which it could be compared. Why, what separation can there be on the eternal shore; what "gathering of the good into vessels," what "casting of the bad away," if the Church consists only of the converted? It is clear, then, that only by turning this parable completely upside down; only by exactly *reversing* its teaching, can we identify the Church or kingdom of Christ with the invisible company of true Christians.

St. Matt. xxii. 1–14. Let us next turn to the parable of the Marriage Feast. The point of this parable again is that the guests, collected in response to the repeated invitations and summonses of the servants, were both *bad and good.*

Ver. 10. But if so, in what does "the kingdom of heaven," as thus described, resemble an invisible church, composed of the good alone? Nay, you cannot even re-write this parable to make it teach anything of the kind. If it is to teach the popular modern belief that the church of God is composed of sanctified souls only, then verse 10 should read thus: "They gathered together what few good they found, and all the bad they excluded." But even this revision would not bolster up the belief in an invisible church; for what shall we make of the man without a wedding garment? He cries aloud, he protests in his own person, against the idea of a church made up of none but saints. The kingdom is compared to a marriage feast principally for this reason, that the guests were "both bad and good," as the members of the visible church are allowed to be.

And what shall we make of the parable of the Ten Virgins? So far from there being five of them foolish

and five wise,[1] all the ten should have been wise, if the church of God consists only of souls wise unto salvation. So with the parable of the Talents. There should be no "unprofitable servant" at all—observe, they are all described as the man's "*own* servants"—if all the members of the Church are holy. Surely, a servant intrusted with a talent must be a member of the Church. Yet this member was "cast out into the outer darkness." And the servant in chap. xxiv. 48–51, who had been *set over the household*, was nevertheless cut asunder. Can the church, or kingdom, or household of God, then, can even its officers, consist only of the converted?

St. Matt. xxv. 1–13. Ver. 14–30.

One parable more—that of the Prodigal Son. The family here represented to us was not composed of good sons only. The prodigal was a member of the father's family. Even when he was in that far country, wasting his substance with harlots, he was still a son. Why, then, should we suppose that GOD's family and household, the church, has no prodigals, or that His flock has no wandering sheep, or that His vineyard has no barren fig trees? There is not one of these images but refutes the idea of an invisible church, a secret community of the sanctified.

St. Luke xv. 11–32. Gal. vi. 10; Eph. ii. 19; 1 Tim. iii. 15. St. Luke xv. 4. xiii. 6.

The last Scripture to which I shall now turn is St. John xv. 1–10. Here, under the similitude of the vine and the branches, our Lord pourtrays the relations of His church (or, what is the same thing, His disciples) to Himself. And could any relation be closer? He is the stem, they are the shoots; their life is derived from His; apart from Him they are nothing and can do nothing. And yet we find in this living vine, as parts, as integral portions of the tree, sterile and unprofitable branches—branches doomed to excision and destruction. "Every branch *in Me* that beareth not fruit He taketh it away." "If a man abide not *in Me*, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered, and they gather them and

Ver. 2.

[1] It is noteworthy that the Revised Version transposes the words of the Authorised, and puts the "foolish virgins" prominently first.

CHAP. VI. cast them into the fire and *they are burned*." Could we have more plain and positive proof that "the church," "the body," "the kingdom of heaven" (for each of these consists of disciples; each of these is but another name for the whole body of disciples), comprises men who are unworthy and reprobate no less than the devout and godly? Why, if the "body of Christ" is composed only of the good, is there this mention of the fire, of the burning, reserved for some of its members? Our Lord's own words must be re-written, must be exactly *reversed*, if His church is what our Nonconformist brethren picture it to be, an invisible host composed exclusively of converted men. The parable of the vine and its branches, some living, some dead, some bearing fruit, others taken away and utterly consumed, cannot by any ingenuity be tortured into teaching that the church is an invisible society of sanctified souls, much less that men can found churches at their pleasure, and least of all that the "body" of Christ consists of two hundred and one separate "bodies" of Christians.

And the same lesson, that the Christian church is what the Jewish church was, a visible body, composed of good, bad, and indifferent members, is *incidentally* taught elsewhere again and again in Holy Scripture. Take, for example, the familiar word "disciples" or "brethren." The church of GOD is made up of these and none other. Well, how were men made "disciples"? By Christ's appointed rite of Baptism, and in no other way. So our Lord taught us at the commencement of His ministry. So He taught us again at its close.[1] But are all baptized disciples devout Christians? Will all of them necessarily be saved? What of Simon Magus? What of the Christians of Ephesus, of Thyatira, of Sardis, of Laodicea? What of the "foolish Galatians," whom St. Paul had to warn against the lusts of the flesh? What of the fornicators and false apostles of Corinth? By one Spirit all these had been baptized

St. John iii. 5; comp. iii. 22. and iv. 1. St. Matt. xxviii. 19.

Acts xx. 30. Rev. ii. 5.

[1] See below on pages 66-69.

into the one body; yes, the very men who made their bodies "members of a harlot" had been made "members of Christ," had been "joined unto the Lord." Mr. Spurgeon indignantly asks, "Has He really taken baptized drunkards and harlots to be members of His body?"[1] Let the Scriptures just cited supply the answer. Does any one deny that these men were and are to be accounted disciples? Does any one say that they were not, and never had been, members of the "Church of GOD at Corinth"? If so, then how does St. Paul come to be addressing them and expostulating with them as the members of CHRIST?[2] Is not the conclusion to a mind not warped by prejudice, not fettered by the trammels of a hard theological system, clear and indisputable, that the "body" of which CHRIST is the Head (like the vine of which He is the stock) may have, and will have, dead members as well as living ones; that the field of the Church will have tares as well as wheat in its borders; that the net of the Church will gather fish of every kind, good and bad; that the company of disciples (or learners) will include, as all other schools do—and it is sometimes forgotten that the Church of CHRIST is but a *school*—some unruly and unprofitable scholars; that the family of GOD, like other families, may and will include some prodigal and rebellious sons.

Rev. ii. 20, iii. 1, iii. 16, 17. Gal. iii. 1. chap. v. 16-21; comp. vi. 12, 13. 1 Cor. v. 1, vi. 9, 10; 2 Cor. xi. 13. 1 Cor. vi. 15-17.

Isa. i. 2; St. Luke xv. 13.

But here we must bring to a close our examination of those Scriptures which proclaim the character and con-

[1] Since writing these words, Mr. Spurgeon has repeatedly proclaimed that even in the *ministry* of the Baptist and Congregationalist bodies are many "grievous wolves" in the shape of false teachers. But he does not and cannot maintain that on this account these men never were ministers, not to say members, of the body.

[2] Calvin's note on 1 Cor. i. 2 is very striking. After asking how St. Paul could designate a society "the church of God" into which so many disorders had crept, that Satan seemed to reign there rather than God, he gives this just answer: "*Nempe quia Evangelii doctrinam, Baptismum, Coenam Domini, quibus symbolis censeri debet Eclesia, apud eos cernebat.*"

CHAP. VI. stitution of CHRIST'S church. I am not so sanguine as to suppose that the considerations here advanced will carry *immediate* conviction to the minds of men, and especially of men habituated for long years to erroneous or inadequate (though popular and prevailing) conceptions of the church or body of CHRIST. But I am persuaded that if pious Nonconformists will honestly and patiently weigh them, wanting "not to have Scripture on their side, but to be on the side of Scripture," they will at last arrive at the conclusion, which the major part of Christendom has long since reached, which indeed was hardly questioned till comparatively recent years, and which, despite the multiplication of sects, it still holds unshaken, viz., that the body of CHRIST is one body and not two hundred and one bodies; that the visible church is a Divine society, which man can neither begin nor end; and that divisions within her and separation from her cannot but be sinful in GOD'S sight.

CHAPTER VII.

SOME OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED.

> "If a visible head were necessary, the church did not exist for the first six centuries after CHRIST, during which that title was never heard of."—*Bishop Bull.*

"THE church of the living GOD," the "body of CHRIST," though now sorely distracted and divided—"by schisms rent asunder, by heresies distrest"—was nevertheless designed by her LORD to be one society, one brotherhood, "one communion and fellowship." The church delineated in the New Testament, though now well nigh "in ruins," is not an invisible company composed of all converted people, nor yet is it a congeries of heterogeneous "churches"—Baptist, Roman, Primitive Methodist, &c.—but one community in each city or country, "one body," holding "one LORD, one faith, one baptism." The church, "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets," has been founded once for all by JESUS CHRIST our LORD, and no man or body of men can found a second—these are the propositions which in preceding papers I have endeavoured to establish.

But before we proceed to the application of these principles, it is necessary that I should notice certain objections which are constantly alleged against this view, or certain consequences to which it is supposed to lead. In the present chapter I shall deal with two of the latter. And first among these is—Romanism.

I. For it has been said, and this is a stock argument with Roman controversialists, that a visible body (such as we affirm the church to be) necessarily implies a visible head, and the head of the Christian body (it is

CHAP. VII. argued) can only be the Pope of Rome. I see that Lord Robert Montagu, since his repudiation of Romish errors, has confessed that it was this specious consideration led him into the Roman fold, and he affirms that it accounts for many similar perversions. And I presume that this is practically what some of our brethren, Presbyterians and Congregationalists, mean when they say that if they believed as we do, in the oneness and visibility of the church, there would be nothing left for them but to submit forthwith to the pretensions of the Papacy. It is clear, consequently, that the subject demands our careful attention. I have to say, therefore, in reply, first, that we deny the major premiss. *We distinctly deny that a visible body necessarily implies a visible head.* For example, the Baptists are a visible body—no one can deny it—where is their visible head? The Wesleyans, again, are visible enough—their ranks are perhaps more serried than those of the Romanists of France, Spain, and Germany—but who has the distinction of being their "head"? I am sure they will not concede that name to the President of their annual Conference. The Quakers are perhaps the most visible of all bodies—as visible, I imagine, as the Roman *Curia* itself—but where shall we find the "head" of the Society of Friends? In what city, in what country does he (or she) reside? Nay, we may go further, and say that the Divine society of the Jewish church had not always a human head. Perhaps you say that in Scripture the king is recognised as supreme head of the Jewish commonwealth, as, for example, in 2 Sam. vii. 8; 1 Kings ii. 26, 27, iii., viii., &c. I am grateful for that observation, for it enables me to remark, that precisely in the same way (and in no other way) do we recognise Christian kings as the earthly heads, *i.e*, governors, of the Christian churches in their respective countries. They stand, or should stand, in the same or a similar relation both to the people and to GOD that the Hebrew king occupied to the Jewish people and to GOD. But even allowing that the Hebrew king was, if anybody was, the head of the

See Article XXXVII.

Old Testament church, it does not follow that that visible church *always* had, and must *necessarily* have, a visible head. Who was its head when there was no king, as, for example, at the date of Judges xviii., xix., or during the captivity, or at the time of our Blessed LORD? But perhaps it will be contended that the *High Priest* was the head of the Jewish communion. That view would square much better with the Roman claims (if they could only prove it) than the headship of the monarch, but unfortunately it will not bear examination. What! was Aaron head over Moses—Moses, who had to intercede for him, lest he should be destroyed? Was Phinehas head over Joshua? Was Abiathar head over Solomon —Solomon who "thrust him out from being priest unto the LORD"? Which priest, again, was supreme head over Israel when there were two of them, as in the case of Zadok and Abiathar, and as there have since been two popes? Or, lastly, who is "visible head" of the "visible body" or church of the Jews now, when they have no high priest? I say, then, that the premiss on which the whole argument turns, viz., that a visible body *must* have a visible head, is not, and cannot be, proven: it is contradicted by the logic of facts. It can only deceive the superficial observer.

Deut. ix. 20; comp. Num. xii., xx. 28, &c. Josh. i. 5, iii. 7, 8, iv. 16, &c. 1 Kings ii. 27. 2 Sam. xv. 35. St. Luke iii. 2.

But we may possibly be reminded that the Church, the "body of Christ," is expressly compared to the human body, and it may be argued that if the members are visible, then the head must be visible also. To this we reply: All the members are *not* visible. The great majority, being in Paradise, are invisible. And if the major part of the church is confessedly unseen, why may not the head be unseen also? Nay, if all the other members were visible, the head might still be invisible. The head is no less the head because it is hidden for a time from view. The head of the state, the "*body* politic," is still the head, though for a time he has "gone into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return." The Head of the body must be of *like nature* with the members: if they are human, He must be

St. Luke xix. 12.

CHAP. VII. human also; but they may be visible and He invisible; they without, He within the veil.

Heb. ii. 17. iv. 15.

But I remark, in the third place, that apparently it never occurred to the Apostles that the visible church must have a visible head. They speak not unfrequently of the Headship over the church, and the only Headship of which *they* are at all cognisant is that of CHRIST, the Head of our humanity, the second Adam. Yes, even when they expressly compare the "body of CHRIST" to a human body, they have not a syllable to say about any visible head. But is it conceivable that inspired Apostles, the teachers of the church through all time, St. Peter (said by Romanists to have been the first Bishop of Rome) among the rest, could have been silent on this subject, if universal Christendom *was* intended by GOD to recognise a visible head and spiritual autocrat in the person of an Italian bishop? If the Pope is even one half of what it is claimed for him that he is, or has one half the authority, how terribly inadequate are the Scriptures, and how cruelly have the Apostles misled us! They everywhere point us to CHRIST as the Head of the church: they drop not the slightest hint that His universal church is to look for any head elsewhere, and now we are told—*nous avons changé tout ça*—that "the visible body must have a visible head," and we are required to believe, as a condition of salvation, that the Bishop of Rome is universal bishop and the vicar of CHRIST; that where the Pope is, there the Church is;[1] that what the Pope does the Church is said to do;[2] that "even if the Pope should go astray by prescribing vices or prohibiting virtues, the church must then hold that vices are good and virtues bad."[3] All this tremendous

Eph. i. 22; iv. 15; v. 23; Col. i. 18.; ii. 19. 1 Cor. xi. 3. Col. ii. 19; Rom. xii. 4, 5; 1 Cor. xii. 12–27, &c.

[1] "*Ubi Petrus, ibi Ecclesia, ac Petrus per Romanum Pontificem loquitur et semper in suis successoribus vivit,*" &c.—Pius IX. in the Encyclical *Qui Pluribus*, November 1846.

[2] "*Illud quod Papa facit, etiam Ecclesia dicitur facere.*"—Fourth Lateran Council, A.D. 1215.

[3] "*Si Papa erraret, præcipiendo vitia vel prohibiendo virtutes, teneretur Ecclesia credere vitia esse bona et virtutes malas, nisi vellet contra conscientiam peccare.*"—Card. Bellarmine, *De Pontif.*, iv. 5.

structure of the Papacy, all these formidable claims, and not one word in the Christian Scriptures to support them! CHAP. VII.

And there is another kind of evidence that is not to be overlooked, that cannot be overlooked by Greeks and Anglicans, though the Latin Church is compelled to denounce the appeal to antiquity as "treason against the Holy Ghost"—the evidence of *history*—the history of the first six centuries of our religion. For that history knows as little of any visible head of universal Christendom as do the writers of the New Testament. If the visible church must have a visible head, it is passing strange that the primitive church had none, and more, that it got on so well without one, for assuredly none was recognised in all those 600 years; still more strange that the bishops of Rome themselves had no idea of the proud position they occupied, as each in turn became the "universal bishop;" most strange of all that one of them, Pope Gregory I., has left it on record that "if any man should claim the title of universal bishop, he would be a fore-runner of Antichrist!"[1] Such is the verdict of history upon the Papal claims. The contention, therefore, that a "visible church must have a visible head," which head can only be the Pope of Rome, is condemned alike by history, by Holy Scripture, and by common sense. See Note p. 51.

II. But the doctrine of "one catholic and apostolic church," the position that no man or body of men can found a new church, is supposed to lead to a still more serious consequence: it is supposed to imperil the salvation of men. "What is a man to do," we are asked, "in a country like Mexico or Spain, which is steeped in corruption and superstition? Is he to leave the church or to lose his soul?"

I answer: He need do neither. But in any case, he is most certainly *not* to pretend to do that which no man can do, namely, to found a new church of CHRIST. If a

[1] "*Quisquis se universalem sacerdotem vocat, Antichristum præcurrit.*"—*Epistolæ*, vii. 33.

CHAP. VII. pure branch of the one historic church exists in the land, he may avail himself of its ministrations. That is not a new church, but a part of the old. Moreover, he may and he ought to labour and to combine for the *reform*—not subversion—of his own national church. Furthermore, he may found a society—such as the "Wesleyan Methodist Society" originally was; such as the "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel" is—a society of Churchmen, that is to say, of Christians, of men *in the church*, for the comfort of his soul or for the diffusion of the truth; he and others like-minded may combine themselves into a little guild, class, or brotherhood, for mutual edification; but he must not call this a "church," nor claim for himself or others authority to minister the Word and sacraments without commission from the church's officers. He may do, in fact, precisely what pious Jews did when *their* church was corrupt and their priests profligate, and he may do no more. They "spake often one to another;" they yearned and prayed for the peace of Jerusalem; they bowed not the knee to Baal; but they never dreamed of offering the daily sacrifice or burning the incense—still less of leaving the one commonwealth of Israel and setting up a rival religious communion. It was the sin of Jeroboam the son of Nebat that he did this—the sin which is so emphatically and so repeatedly condemned. But the faithful Israelite abode in the church wherein he was called, and hoped and prayed and laboured for better days. The faithful Christian will do the same. He will receive the sacraments, even at the hands of vicious priests, even from a Borgia or Pope John XXIII., if they will grant them to him, assured that the Just and Holy One will not let him suffer for their misdeeds, and remembering that the "unworthiness of the ministers hinders not the effect of the sacraments." The grace is GOD'S grace, be the channel ever so polluted.[1] And if they unjustly deny

Article XXVI.

[1] It is significant that in one of the genealogies of our Blessed LORD given in Scripture, the harlot Tamar, the harlot Rahab, Ruth

him the sacraments of CHRIST's religion, as they have already denied him the Word of life, then he will comfort himself with the thought that the sacraments are only necessary to salvation "where they may be had," and that GOD's grace is not tied up to the means of grace,[1] and that "if we cannot go to the house of the LORD, we may always go to the LORD of the house." It will doubtless seem a poor tame course to take in these days, when Mr. Spurgeon has just been considering whether he should not *start yet one more* denomination, and when every man with a crotchet must run a church to air it in;[2] but whether it will not be more for the glory of GOD and the gain of Christendom, yes, and of the man himself, is another matter. The church in our LORD's day was gangrened through and through with hypocrisy, formality, and covetousness. Its priests and teachers—we know what they were and what He called them. But what was *His* counsel about forming a new church? "The Scribes and the Pharisees," He said, "sit on Moses' seat; *all things therefore whatsoever they bid you, these do and observe*, but do not ye after their works." CHAP. VII. St. Matt. xxiii. Ver. 2.

the Moabitess, and Bathsheba the adulteress, have a place. Was ever channel more corrupt? Nor is this argument invalidated if both the genealogies are those of Joseph.

[1] *Gratia non ligatur mediis.*

[2] "Schism is thought no sin, and that which the Reformers shuddered at and shrank from, that secession which they feared to make even from a church so corrupt as that of Rome then was, every petty ecclesiastic now presumes to imitate."—Dr Dods, 1 *Corinthians* (*in the Expositor's Bible*), p. 38.

Note. It is not denied that some of the earlier popes magnified their office as bishops of the imperial city, putting forth large pretensions to hear appeals, to judge between other bishops, &c.; nor yet that the Roman see occupied, *by virtue of its position*—it was the *umbilicus* of the western world—an exalted and exceptional place among sees. What is asserted is, that during the first 600 years the bishops of Rome did *not* claim, as they claim now, to be universal bishops, and CHRIST'S vicars upon earth.

CHAPTER VIII.

SOME FURTHER OBJECTIONS.

"These were all built on the same rock; all professed the same faith; all received the same sacraments; all performed the same devotions, and thereby were all reputed members of the same church."—*Bishop Pearson.*

THREE other objections urged against one or other of the arguments advanced above have been brought to my notice, and therefore, though they seem to me to be somewhat superficial, I am hardly at liberty to pass them by. I will deal with them as briefly as possible.

I. Your main contention is—so I shall be told—that the church of GOD is one and indivisible. You deny the name of "church" to societies of human origin, to bodies founded of men, such, for example, as the "Wesleyans," or the "United Methodist Free Church," or the "Teetotal Church," or the "New Jerusalem Church." You object to the common phrase of Nonconformist pulpits and platforms and newspapers, "the churches"—meaning thereby (the so-called) Episcopal, Baptist, Wesleyan, and other "orthodox" communions. And yet the Bible speaks not only of "the church," but almost as often of "the churches." We read of "the churches of CHRIST," "the churches of Asia," "the churches of GOD," of "all the churches," &c. Indeed, "the churches" are mentioned over *thirty* times in the New Testament. Are not these, I shall be asked, sufficient warrants for the popular belief that—

1 Cor. xvi. 1.
Ver. 19.
1 Thess. ii. 14.
2 Cor. xi. 28.

> "Not to one church alone, but seven
> The voice prophetic spoke from heaven,"—

the belief, that is to say, of all English and American

Nonconformists, and of some English Churchmen too, that each and every body of professing Christians, when and by whomsoever founded, whatsoever its origin—even if it had its beginning in envying and strife—and how much so ever it may differ in doctrine and constitution from other similar bodies, is, nevertheless, so long as it "holds the Head," or, to use a common expression, so long as it "preaches the gospel," is entitled to the name of church, and *is* a church—a valid, and legitimate, and regularly-constituted church of CHRIST? Though, as is admitted, these bodies, when they were first started, for the most part never dreamed of calling themselves "churches;" though they were content to call themselves, and be called by others (what they are still called in their standards and in legal documents), the "Wesleyan Methodist *Society*," the "Methodist New *Connexion*," the "Wesleyan *Association*," and so forth; though we can trace in some instances the slow and gradual assumption by these same societies of the name and attributes of a *church*, and in other cases can see that process actually going on at the present time under our very eyes, yet still it is the belief of most English Christians that these bodies are now, and indeed were from the first (if they had but known it), true and lawful and complete Christian "churches," as true and lawful and complete as the "church of GOD which was at Corinth," 1 Cor. i. 2. or the "church of the Laodiceans," or "the churches of Col. iv. 16. Asia," referred to above. To deny the name of church, indeed—so they may go on to remind me—to any association of earnest Christian men that chooses to claim it, is generally thought to be gross arrogance and exclusiveness. To say that no Christian man, however able and however saintly, *can* found a new church, the liberal sentiments of the age denounce as so much priestcraft and intolerance. It is in vain, it may be added, that you point out that these different denominations have different beliefs, different standards, different polities; that they speak in their formal confessions of faith with varying and discordant voices; that some-

CHAP. VIII.

times they flatly contradict one another. In vain you repeat that you only call them what they once called themselves, "societies," "denominations," "connexions;" the religious world for the most part will have it that they are "churches," and wants to know why, if there were "seven churches in Asia," there may not be seven or seventy different churches in England.

The answer to all this is extremely simple—so simple and obvious indeed, that a reflecting Nonconformist would hardly think of raising this difficulty. It is that the "churches of Galatia," the "churches of Asia," and indeed "all the churches" of that age were homogeneous and united. That is to say, they were altogether *unlike* the varied and differing "churches" of to-day, and they were *like* the "churches" or congregations of any one communion, say, for example, the congregations of the Wesleyans or of the Church of England. Such things as rival, sectarian, or dissident churches were altogether unknown. We are told at the present day that it is absolutely necessary to maintain Nonconformity as such[1] to prevent torpor and stagnation; but it at once occurs to us that such a thing as Nonconformity was utterly unknown in the Apostolic age,[2] and that Christianity in that age got on very well without it. All the congregations of Christians in that day—each of which was called, as it is now, a "church"—were of one way of thinking; all had the same belief, the same organisation, the same origin. It is true that the spirit of division was already at work; that there were parties within the church, though even these were denounced by the Apostles; but such a thing as a "Church of Paul," or a

1 Cor. ii. 12; iii. 3, 4; xi. 18, 19; 3 John 9.

[1] Mr. R. F. Horton, "An Appeal to Wavering Nonconformists."

[2] "Paul does not seem to contemplate as possible that which in our day is the normal condition—a church broken up into little sections, each of which worships by itself and looks upon the rest with some distrust or contempt. It did not as yet appear possible that the members of the one body of CHRIST should refuse to worship their common LORD in fellowship with one another and in one place."—*Dr. Marcus Dods (Presbyterian) on* 1 *Cor.* i. 12.

"New Connexion of Cephas," or a separate community of Gnostics or Baptists was unheard of. Notwithstanding the tendencies to division which are a part of human nature, and which culminated in open rupture and dissent not long afterwards; notwithstanding the Galatianism and rationalism, and we may add the immoralities which were rife, Dissent, as such, was unknown, and therefore it is clear that the "churches" of that day were altogether unlike the "churches" of this. The "churches of Galatia," for example, all held the Apostolic creed, all acknowledged the Apostolic authority, all had the same discipline, all adhered to the "one body." We cannot by any stretch of imagination conceive the first Christians acknowledging, as we are asked to do, nay, as we are denounced as bigots if we refuse to do, two rival churches, much less two hundred![1] I submit, therefore, to my Nonconformist brethren in Christ that Scripture, so far from justifying their language and opinions as to the plurality of churches, emphatically condemns it. The "churches" of the New Testament formed part of "one body," not two hundred and twenty separate bodies.

1 Cor. xv. 12; 2 Tim. ii. 18. 1 Cor. v. 1, 11; Rev. ii. 14, 20.

II. I now turn to a further objection. You identify (it is said) "the kingdom of God" or "the kingdom of heaven" with the "church;" that is to say, with a visible body, with an organic community. But that kingdom is expressly described to us in Scripture as something ethical or spiritual, as something unseen and internal. We are told, for example, by our Lord that "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation;" that it is "within" [Marg. Revised Version, "among"] men. We are told again by St. Paul that it "is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and

St. Luke xvii. 20, 21. Rom. xiv. 17.

1 "The indivisible unity of CHRIST Himself is in Paul's mind the sufficient argument for the unity of the church. If you can divide the one CHRIST, and if one church can live on one part, another on another, then you may have several churches, but if there be one CHRIST indivisible, then is there but one church indivisible."—*Dr. Marcus Dods*, p. 42.

CHAP VIII.

joy in the HOLY GHOST," and so forth. And yet (they say to us) you build your argument on the assumption that the term "kingdom of God" is synonymous with the term "church"! Well, we have certainly affirmed, in common with the great mass of theologians, that the church is sometimes called the "kingdom of God," and in proof of this—for the sake of brevity—I simply quoted the *dictum* of Dr. W. L. Alexander, an authority to whom, I supposed, most Nonconformists would bow, that "the church is the kingdom of heaven, and the kingdom of heaven is the church." I find, however, that many later Dissenters dissent from this statement, and make a point of carefully distinguishing between the two—indeed, it is almost necessary to their system that they should do so. Let us take one example. Dr. Fairbairn, in his "Studies in the Life of Christ," says: (1) The church has, and the kingdom has not, a formal or organised being. But why, we ask in reply, has not the kingdom an organisation? for the idea of organisation enters into the very conception of a kingdom—you cannot have a kingdom, or anything that answers to the name, without it. If the kingdom is wholly inorganic and immaterial, then what can "water" have to do with it, or what place is there for "keys"? These are questions that have not yet been answered. But he also observes (2) that men can make or administer laws in the church, but not in the kingdom; the truth being that neither in the church nor the kingdom, each being the province and property of God, can men make *laws*—all they can do is to make *bye-laws;* to "decree rites and ceremonies," for example. Dr. Fairbairn allows that the two are "most intimately related," for, he says: (1) The kingdom creates the church; but (2) the church exists for the sake of the kingdom.[1] But what is this but

See Appendix, Note C.

St. John iii. 5. St. Matt. xvi. 18.

[1] I am glad to be able to cite Dr. Fairbairn as a witness to the visibility of the church. Though he writes in one place: "There is no evidence that JESUS ever created or thought of creating an organised society" (*Contemporary Review*, July 1885), yet in his "Studies in the Life of Christ" he says: "The term 'church' has

to say that these names represent to us the two sides of the shield, the Divine and human aspects of the Christian commonwealth, or the reign of our LORD in its subjective and objective ideas and relations. Anyhow, the two are identified in St. Matt. xvi. 18, 19, "On this rock I will build *My church*, and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." And if you will only *interpret the term "church" as you interpret the term "kingdom,"* if, that is to say, you will remember that church and kingdom alike have not only members (or *subjects*), but have also *laws, principles, aims, designs, purposes*, then you will find no difficulty in identifying them. It is only those who assume that the term "church" is exhausted of its meaning when we have thought of the *persons* who compose the church; who forget that "church"—precisely like "kingdom"—sometimes stands for the *purposes for which the church* (or kingdom) was founded and is maintained; who forget that every society must have *aims and rules* as well as members; and more, that members are enrolled for the sake of the aims—only these will find any difficulty in the language of Scripture. For example: "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness," &c. What does this mean but that the *aim and design*, the *idea*, in fact, of the church, or kingdom of God, is not eating, &c., but righteousness, &c. The language is precisely parallel with a phrase current a few years ago: "*L'Empire c'est la paix*"—words which everybody understood to convey that the *aim and object* of the French Empire was to maintain peace. Nobody ever thought of saying because of those words that that empire was not a visible corporation, or that its subjects could not be recognised. So, again, when we read "The kingdom of heaven is within you," there is no reference to the subjects of the kingdom (the members, *i.e.*, of the church), but to its *laws*, to its *sphere*, as an inward rule over hearts and consciences. On the other hand, when

See Gore, *Christian Ministry*, p. 43.

both a universal and specific reference. But the idea in both cases is the same. It *always denotes an organised society*."

CHAP. VIII.

we read that the kingdom is like a "net, gathering of every kind," we are to think not of the laws or aims, but of the *subjects*, good and bad, of the kingdom (of the members, *i.e.*, good and bad of the church). So, when we read of little children, that "of such is the kingdom of heaven," we are clearly to understand that such as these, like the "poor in spirit," are fit and worthy subjects of the kingdom; that is to say, they are proper members of the Church Militant, and will have part in the Church Triumphant. The confusion—for such it certainly is—arises from overlooking the sacred purposes for which the church or Christian brotherhood exists, namely, to make men "poor in spirit," to make them "as little children," to promote "righteousness and joy and peace," &c.; from forgetting, too, that a kingdom must have a framework, a constitution, a body of subjects, an army of officers, as well as laws and aims and principles. Yes, "the kingdom is the church and the church is the kingdom," but both church and kingdom may be regarded (and are regarded in Scripture) from very different points of view.

Heb. viii. 10; x. 16.

St. Matt. v. 3.

Comp. 1 Cor. vi. 10.

III. One final objection must have a word of notice. "You have said," I am told, "that it is of the essence of a *body* to be visible. But we read of a 'spiritual body.' Is not that invisible?" I answer: The term "spiritual body" does not mean "a body which is *all spirit*," for then it would not be a *body* at all: but a body which is interpenetrated and dominated, not as now by the soul, but by the spirit. The contrast in St. Paul's mind is not between the material and the immaterial, or the visible and invisible, but between the animal (or psychical) and the spiritual. The resurrection body is still a *body*. Just as to each seed, so to each man God giveth a body. The body of our Lord was "raised a spiritual body," but it was recognisable enough; it could eat and drink; could be touched and handled, except when the eyes of men were holden. His "body, the church," is also visible—to those who have eyes to see it.

1 Cor. xv. 44.

St. Luke xxiv. 39,43; St. John xx. 27. St. Matt. xxviii. 9; St. Luke xxiv. 42.

CHAPTER IX.

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH POLITY.

"The spirit of singularity in a few ought to give place unto public judgment."—*Hooker.*

I am reminded here that so far I have not met, except incidentally, the argument of the Independents, namely, that "by the will of Christ every society of Christians, organised for Christian worship . . . is a Christian Church, and *is independent of external control.*"[1] It is impossible in these pages to enter upon a *detailed* examination of the Independent polity, but if only for the sake of the great names with which it is connected, and its thousands of intelligent adherents, it demands a brief notice.

Now the Congregationalist position has perhaps nowhere been more forcibly stated than by Dr. R. W. Dale in his "Congregational Church Polity." With much that he says Churchmen can of course agree. There are features in contemporary Independency, again, which are by no means new or confined to that denomination.[2] But there is one point—the *peculium* of this body—which is directly opposed to the fundamental ideas of Churchmen, and indeed of most Christians, namely, the *independency* of each particular church, its "right to elect its own officers, manage its own affairs, and to stand *independent of and irresponsible to*, all

[1] Dr. R. W. Dale.

[2] "There is a circulation, as in fashion of clothes, so of opinions, Brownism being no more than Donatism vamped with some new additions."—Thomas Fuller, *Church History*, Book ix. 6, 3.

CHAP. IX. authority, saving only that of . . . the LORD JESUS CHRIST,"[1] on which I cannot think that his argument will carry conviction to the minds of many Nonconformists, and for these reasons :—

1. This view was unknown in Christendom, at least for fourteen centuries, until, about A.D. 1570, it found an advocate in the person of Robert Browne, who himself subsequently renounced it.

See *Nineteenth Century*, Oct. 1890.

2. Even Congregationalists are themselves dissatisfied with their church polity. Dr. Davidson, for example, in his "Congregational Lecture" (1848) says: "Congregationalists are wrong in splitting up what ought to be one church, the company of believers in modern towns, into several churches, each with its own pastor, which in their independent individuality are patches and shreds, often incapable of a right self-government, because they have lost sight of the unity and kind of government existing in the earliest churches." Similarly Dr. Stoughton : "Independency is liable to fall into the weakness of a self-assertion and individuality which in small communities becomes jealous of everything which seems like a yoke of bondage." Dr. Mullens (Baptist), again, has asked: "Shall petulance, ill-temper, or autocratic pride be allowed always to be throwing off weak bodies of people who call themselves independent churches?" And quite recently, another Congregationalist, the Rev. G. S. Reaney, writes: "Independency has done a great work, but unless its *inherent isolation* [*i.e.*, its distinctive feature] is cured, the future must be a failure."[2] And similar testimonies could easily be multiplied from the "Congregational Year Book" itself.

3. Independency is practically surrendered even by Independents. Dr. Dale would have us believe—he alleges no sufficient argument in proof of his assertion—that in the first age "every church *stood apart*." But now, they have discovered that it will not do for churches to

[1] The Congregationalist *Declaration of Faith, Church Order, and Discipline*, "Principles of Church Order," iv.

[2] *British Weekly*, September 13, 1889.

stand apart any longer, and so they "have gathered the bonds of relationship amongst churches of their own order into a comprehensive girdle"[1] in the *Congregational Union*. The central article of their creed is the *independence* of churches, and yet the "Year Book" for 1871 confesses that "the churches in apostolic days *recognised their interdependence*." Dr. Dale says again that "it is obviously inconsistent with the principles of Congregationalism that any central authority should attempt to impose a creed either on the ministers or on the members of Congregationalist churches." Yet some authority has found it necessary to put forth a creed —for what else is a "Declaration of Faith," &c.—on behalf of these same Independent churches—it may be found in the "Year Book" for 1871. "What *essential* difference is there," we may fairly ask, with Canon Curteis (Bampton Lectures, p. 117) "between this 'declaration of faith, order, and discipline' in thirty-three articles, and a similar 'declaration' in thirty-nine articles?" "The right of each church to elect its own officers," again, is a fundamental article of Independency, yet the Union confesses to having "commanded an influence over the weaker churches in the election of their ministers." Are we far wrong in saying that all this points to the practical abandonment of pure and simple Congregationalism?

4. The polity of Independency directly contradicts the language and ideas of the New Testament. For if Christendom was by CHRIST'S will designed to be, not one commonwealth, but a myriad of minute republics, each of them autonomous and absolutely independent of the rest, then surely our Lord should have spoken not of "My Church," but "My churches," and His Apostles should in like manner have spoken of the "bodies," not "body" of CHRIST. Besides, as a matter of fact, the Apostolic churches were *not* independent.[2] Dr. Dale labours hard to prove that the council of Jerusalem, for

Matt. xvi. 18.

[1] Dr. Stoughton.

[2] See especially Acts ix. 31. "The church throughout all Judæa," &c., 1 Cor. xi. 16.

CHAP. IX. example, had no authority. He contends that Paul and Barnabas were sent up to Jerusalem merely to find out what were the views of that church on the question of circumcision—not at all to have that question settled by conciliar authority. Yet ver. 6 informs us that "the apostles and elders came together to *consider* of this matter;" in ver. 19 St. James says "My *judgment* is," &c.; in ver. 28 the council lays upon the churches of Antioch and Syria a "*burden*," and in chap. xvi. 4 "the *decrees* of the apostles and elders that were at Jerusalem" are delivered to the churches of Cilicia for them to "keep." Does all this, we ask, look like Independency? Were the churches of Syria and Cilicia "under the *immediate* governance of the Lord Jesus Christ," and so free from all external control? So again as to the election of officers. Dr. Dale argues from the appointment of Matthias and of the "seven" that the right of choosing its clergy belongs to each congregation, forgetting apparently that both these cases were entirely exceptional: the former because it filled up a vacancy in the *Apostolate*,[1] the latter, because the choice of "the seven" was evidently left with "the multitude of the disciples" for a special reason, because of the "murmuring" which had taken place.[2] Elsewhere we find the Apostles "appointed for them elders in every city," and "in the Pastoral Epistles, when their functions had become more spiritual, the deacons were to be appointed, not elected"[3] Even the exercise of discipline, which in 1 Cor. v. may appear to be lodged in the congregation, is elsewhere exercised by individuals.

Acts xv.

Acts i. 23–26; vi. 3.

Acts xiv. 23; *cf.* Tit. i. 5.

1 Tim. iii. 8, 12.

1 Tim. i. 20; 3 John 10.

5. But no less does this system subvert the teaching of the Old Testament. It assumes that our LORD came, not to fulfil the law and the prophets, but to destroy.

[1] The casting of lots alone removes this case out of the category of ordinary appointments, and shows that it furnishes no precedent for these days.

[2] Bishop Jacobson, Speaker's Comm. *in loc.*

[3] *Ibid.*

For if the Jewish church consisted, as it did, of one congregation and no more, then we are entitled to expect, by that law of continuity which runs through all GOD'S dealings with mankind, that law which CHRIST Himself allowed, that the people of GOD under the new dispensation will form one congregation also. Instead of which, on this hypothesis the one "church in the wilderness" has been replaced by thousands of separate and autocratic churches, each of which "has the right to be free from the control of any external authority, ecclesiastical or civil." According to Congregationalists, the unity and solidarity of Judaism have given place in the new and better covenant to Independency, isolation, and division.

6. Nor is the promise of our LORD'S presence, on which Independency mainly rests, confined to communities of two or three. It *is* covenanted to such assemblies; it is also vouchsafed to larger bodies of Christians, say to synods or councils, met in His name. The "two or three," therefore, have no advantage over the representatives of two or three millions. What reason, consequently, can there be for isolating the "two or three" from the rest of their brethren in CHRIST, for drawing the line at the congregation? If union is strength, if safety is found in a multitude of counsellors, why must every nice question of doctrine or discipline—questions which affect all Christians, for we are "every one members one of another"—be decided by little coteries of possibly quite uninstructed disciples? What reason can be assigned why each "church" should repudiate the counsel and control of a larger and wiser body? Could a more effectual method be devised for promoting discord and disintegration? I respectfully submit, therefore, in the last place, that Congregationalism stands condemned by the tribunals of experience and common-sense.[1]

St. Matt. xviii. 20.

Prov. xi. 14; xxiv. 6.

Rom. xii. 5.

[1] See Appendix, Note D.

CHAPTER X.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP—I.

"Entered we are not into the visible church before our admittance by the door of Baptism."—*Hooker.*
"By Baptism we are admitted into the church."—*John Wesley.*

WHERE *is the Church? Who is and who is not a Churchman? Who is and who is not a Christian?* There are, to my thinking, few questions, either in the realm of theology or outside it, more difficult to answer than these. Certainly there are few which are more *delicate*, which have bred more heart-burnings, yes, and it must be said, more positive hatred—God forgive us for it! These are questions which have long set both preachers and professors of the gospel of charity by the ears; which, among others, have divided the consecrated "members of Christ" into hostile camps; which have disgraced, by the shameful and fratricidal animosities which they have aroused, the very name of religion; nay, which have fanned, if they have not kindled, the flames of persecution. And though

> "The war and waste of clashing creeds
> Now end in words and not in deeds,
> And no one suffers loss or bleeds
> For thoughts which men call heresies;"

yet who can pretend that these controversies are (like some others) "extinct volcanoes," or that they can never more blaze up into fury and desolate the church which they have failed to define?

Still, dangerous as is the ground, I am persuaded that we must try to define the terms "church" and "church-

man" as the basis of and preliminary to all reunion. There is, there can be, no peace at all worthy of the name until these problems are solved. We must "touch bottom" before we can build. Not until they have been faced and grappled with and laid to rest can Church and Chapel ever be "one body in CHRIST."

Nor does it seem at first sight as if it should be hard to decide them. For if, as we have seen reason to believe—and it is only what by far the major part of intelligent Christendom believes, and has believed for eighteen centuries—if the Church of CHRIST is a *visible body*, it should not be difficult to say what persons have and what have not been admitted into it; what persons, if any, have been excluded from it; what persons, if any, have taken themselves out of it. And yet it is precisely here that the difficulty lies. With many Nonconformists the great question is as to those who have been *admitted* into the church, whilst the problem that exercises Churchmen is as to those who have been *excluded* or have *excluded themselves* from it. And so deep-seated are the differences of thought between them, that it may seem to some as if they never could be reconciled. All the same let us make the attempt, for if we can but untie these knots, then we shall have found the answers to the questions, "*Where* is the church?" and "*Who* is a Churchman?"

And in seeking for the *Scripture* answer to the question which will occupy the rest of this chapter, "What persons have been 'grafted into the body of CHRIST'S church?'"—observe the *body*, not the *soul*, or company of true believers: that is known only to GOD—we must be prepared beforehand to find the church in a state of profound disorder and confusion. The powers of evil, it is true, have not *prevailed* against her, but they have ravaged and desolated her fields. Nor need this surprise us. It *would* surprise us if the crafts and assaults so potent elsewhere had been powerless here: if after these centuries of conflict the church had not her scars and wounds. She has only suffered as the Jewish church

CHAP. X.

suffered in her time; her disorder is *not so great* as that of the theocracy which went before, and not greater than our LORD and His Apostles foretold. If, therefore, the visible church does not seem to us to be sufficiently visible;[1] if its ordinances have been depraved; if its order is but partially observed; if its authority is contemned, it is for us to remember that we were told beforehand that it would be so.

1 Kings xiii. 26 *seq.*; xix. 14, 18; Isa. i. 2–10; v. 2; Jer. v.; xxiii. 10 *seq.*, &c. Josh. v. 7; 2 Kings xxii. 13; Ezra x. 10; Ezek. viii. 8–17; St. Matt. xxiii. St. Matt. xiii. 25; xxiv. 12; St. Luke xviii. 8. Acts xx. 29, 30; Rom. xvi. 17; 1 Cor. xi. 19; 2 Thess. ii. 3; 1 Tim. iv. 1; 2 Tim. iii. 1; 2 Pet. iii. 3, &c. St. Matt. xviii. 17. Acts xi. 26; xxvi. 28; 1 Pet. iv. 16.

How then are men admitted into the church? What act or deed makes a man a *Christian*—not in the modern and conventional acceptance of the word,[2] but in the *Bible* sense—that is to say, a *follower* (however imperfect, ignorant, and sinful) of CHRIST? *The Scripture knows of no way, no form, no rite of admission, but that of baptism.* It may and will seem to Nonconformists a hard saying, but we *must* say it, if Scripture—not to speak of the writings of antiquity or the lessons of church history—is to be our guide. It is baptism, by whomsoever ministered, even by layman, or by heretic (provided, of course, that the two essentials of the form of baptism, the two things mentioned by our LORD, water and the word, are not wanting), that makes a man a disciple, a Churchman, a Christian. We may regret that this should be so, but that it is so is clear and certain. Of course, I know that these propositions will require to be proven. I submit that the following *is* the proof.

St. John iii. 5.

1. Our Lord, at the very beginning of His ministry, solemnly declared: "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he *cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*" Now that kingdom, we have seen reason to believe,[3] "is the church, and the church is the kingdom." The entry to the church, therefore—to the kingdom in its aspect of a *society*, a *body of subjects*—is only by "water and the Spirit." But here, no doubt, the stock question will

[1] "This catholic church hath been sometimes more, sometimes less, visible."—*Westminster Confession*, Art. xxv.

[2] The term "Christian" is now constantly used subjectively of *good* Christians, as, *e.g.*, in "The Christian" newspaper.

[3] See page 56 above.

be raised, "What are we to understand by *water*"? Oh, the ingenuity that has been expended over that word! Oh, the determined efforts to torture it somehow into meaning *anything but water!* Who has not seen the wildest (because bewildering and despairing) suggestions as to what it can *be conceived* to mean? But I for one want to know why we may not take the word in its natural and literal meaning;[1] why we may not understand our LORD to *mean* precisely what He *said;* why "water" on His lips should not mean "the element of water"? For if He did *not* mean this, and *did* mean something quite different, then we cannot help asking why, in the name of charity and in the interests of truth and unity, He did not *name* that other thing, and why He did name "water," though He meant nothing of the kind? For, of course, He knew at that moment that millions upon millions of His future disciples would take Him to mean *literal water;* He knew that Christendom generally, and its greatest divines in particular, would understand His words of the *water of baptism*; and yet some would have us believe that, knowing all this, He deliberately used a word which could not fail to mislead—a word which was *certain* to put Christians on a wrong track.[2] To such a dilemma are those reduced who deny that this verse refers to baptism! Nor is this all. For they also forbid us to interpret this passage, as it is only natural to do, by the light of contemporary events. Finding "water" and "the Spirit" here mentioned in the same breath, it is only natural, in considering their meaning, to remember that "water" and "the Spirit" are found

[1] "I hold it for a most infallible rule in expositions of sacred Scripture, that where a literal construction will stand, the farthest from the latter is commonly the worst."—Hooker, V. lix. 2.

[2] It is not to the purpose to retort that in Matt. iii. 11 we read of baptism "with the HOLY GHOST and *with fire;*" for (1) "this was literally fulfilled at the day of Pentecost" (Alford). (2) It may be fulfilled literally hereafter. Many commentators understand: "He will baptize the *righteous* with the Holy Spirit, and the *wicked* with fire" (comp. ver. 12). (3) Even if a "literal construction will not stand" here, it will stand in St. John iii. 5.

CHAP. X.

joined together at an event of profound importance which had taken place but a short time before—our LORD'S baptism. *There* we see "water"—the water of the Jordan: *there* we see "the Spirit," in the shape of a dove. At CHRIST'S baptism they were joined together. All the same (these persons say) you must put them asunder here. You must not think for a moment, notwithstanding this striking parallel, that baptism is intended. "Water" and "the Spirit," they contend, point to a totally different thing in St. Matt. iii. from "water and the Spirit" in St. John iii. This, then, is a second dilemma. Here is a third. You must not interpret this passage (according to those who say that "water" means "*not*-water") by the light of other passages where water and the Spirit are found referring to baptism—as, for example, Titus iii. 5; Acts ii. 38, x. 47, 48, &c. No, you must put some other meaning, *coûte que coûte*, upon the word "water," in order to shut out all reference to baptism. This is really what it comes to. So that if St. John iii. 5 does *not* refer to baptism, then we must set language, and history, and Scripture at defiance. We affirm, however, that it *can* refer to nothing else; and so we are reduced to the conclusion that baptism "with water and the Spirit," *i.e.*, Christian baptism — John's baptism was with water only—is *the only door of entrance* into the visible church of CHRIST. Further,

St. John i. 31, 33; St. Matt. iii. 11.

St. John iii. 22; iv. 1.

2. Our LORD, during His ministry, was constantly "making disciples." But how were these disciples made, how enrolled? Let the passage last cited supply the answer. "JESUS made and baptized more disciples than John." By baptism "in the cloud and in the sea" men had been made "Moses' disciples." By baptism in the Jordan men had been made John's disciples. By the same rite of baptism were men now made disciples of JESUS.

1 Cor. x. 2.

St. Matt. xxviii. 19.

3. Our LORD, at the close of His ministry, gave this command: "Go ye and *make disciples* of all the nations, baptizing them," &c. Now, the church consists of *dis-*

ciples—of men who are *learning* Christianity—*not* (as is constantly assumed) of sanctified persons, of men who have already learned of CHRIST. It is a school, not a mere showroom of Christian graces. Hence the next command, to teach them after baptism. But how are they *made* disciples; how *brought into* the school of the church? Our LORD'S words are unmistakable; there is no evading or escaping them: it is by "*baptizing them* into the name," &c.[1]

See Note 1, p. 71.

Ver. 20.

4. One passage more must suffice, viz., Acts ii. 41, 47, "Then they that received his word were baptized, and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls." How were these new converts, who had just heard the Gospel for the first time—so far were they from being mature Christians—how were they forthwith "added" to the little band which then formed the church, the *visible* church or congregation at Jerusalem? Only by baptism. Those who were baptized were admitted into the body, the community, the church; those not baptized remained outside it

Comp. 1 Cor. xii. 13.

And yet, in the teeth of these and other testimonies which might be cited, there are Christians who deny that baptism has anything to do with our admission into the visible church. Indeed, some of them go farther still, and assert that "there is no evidence that JESUS ever created or thought of creating an organised society,"[2] though the same writer allows that John organised a society, and that baptism was the door of entrance into it. "John," he writes, "made his baptism represent not simply an individual change, but a social fact—entrance into a society prepared for the kingdom which

[1] Even if the reading *βαπτίζοντες* be adopted, still the inference is irresistible that men are to be "made disciples" *by* "baptizing them." Otherwise we must understand our LORD to say: "Make men disciples by preaching, at the same time ministering a rite which has nothing to *do with discipleship*." Besides, it is not as if this text stood alone. We have to remember how men were made proselytes; we have to interpret this by other Scriptures, *e.g.*, St. John iii. 5; Acts ii. 41; 1 Cor. xii. 13, &c.

[2] Dr. Fairbairn.

CHAP. X. was at hand." "It was but in accordance with Oriental ideas," he says, "that entrance into the society should be signified by a symbol. Hence the command to repent was supplemented by the command to be baptized."[1] Yet he will have it that "the Christian society"—he says the church is an organised society,[2] little as CHRIST thought of creating it—"is constituted by faith in CHRIST." We are asked to believe, that is to say, that the rite of baptism, when ministered by John, *was* a badge of discipleship, and *did* admit into his new brotherhood; but that the same rite, when ministered by our LORD's disciples, and ministered at the same time, had no such significance! And yet not a word is said to apprise us of this fundamental distinction between the two! Though "it was in accordance with Oriental ideas" that entrance into a society should be marked by an outward symbol, and though in the preaching of Christianity, no less than in John's ministry, "the command to repent was supplemented by the command to be baptized," yet we are now told that John's society was constituted by baptism and our LORD's is constituted by faith! It is obvious that a private interpretation like this, and one which bristles with difficulties, can never stand for a moment against a belief *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*—a belief never questioned till modern times, that the rite of baptism is the one door of entrance into the visible church of CHRIST.

See Note 2, p. 71.

Of course we do not mean that baptism *only* admits into the society or "body of CHRIST's church." It does much more. What we *do* affirm, as the teaching of the Scriptures above cited, is that baptism, and baptism alone, does this. We say that Holy Scripture leaves a candid and unprejudiced mind no option. We are *compelled* to believe, if we accept the Bible as the rule of our faith and practice, that baptism is the door of entry

[1] *Studies in the Life of Christ*, p. 73.
[2] See note on p. 56.

into the kingdom of GOD; that baptism makes men "Christians" or "disciples" of CHRIST; that baptism adds them to the church or congregation of "brethren." I have no difficulty, therefore, in answering the question: "Who have and who have not been *admitted* into the visible church?" The baptized have, and the unbaptized have not. Just as circumcision made a man outwardly a Jew, a member of the Old Testament church, so does baptism make a man outwardly and visibly a Christian, a member of the New Testament church. All those duly baptized, whether by Romish priest or Revival preacher, all these have been made "Churchmen." For a man is not baptized into the "Church of England" or the "Church of Rome," but into the church of CHRIST, into the "one body" of the faithful. "By one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free." CHAP. X.

But does any one object, in the spirit of Nicodemus, that he can hardly believe that so trivial, so insignificant a rite as baptism—"a few drops of water and a dozen words"—carries with it such large consequences? Then we can only remind him Who it was that instituted it. If GOD the Son *did* appoint a little water and a few words; if He made this rite (perhaps intentionally simple) obligatory on His disciples, then we are sure there *must* be imperious reasons for it, and it must have *some* profound significance. For the less it means the nearer He comes to being a formalist. 1 Cor. xii. 13.

Note 1. "The church is an instrument under GOD to make people better, not a society to label all its members as perfect."—Bishop Ridding.

Note 2. Dr. Paton allowed at the Langham St. Conference (Report, p. 28) that baptism admits *believers* and *babes* into communion with the church. But if only a "believer"—in the modern sense of the word—then who can tell whether this or that person is within the visible church or no, for who can read the heart? Of course he cannot mean that a mere ritual act admits into the (so-called) "invisible church."

CHAPTER XI.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP—II.

"If by external profession they be Christians, they are of the visible Church of CHRIST; yea, although they be impious idolaters, wicked heretics, persons excommunicable, yea, and *cast out* for notorious improbity."—*Hooker.*

THAT every baptized person, wheresoever and by whomsoever baptized [1]—provided of course that he was baptized as our LORD appointed, with water and the word—that every duly baptized person was by baptism *admitted* a member of the Catholic or world-wide church—the only "Catholic" church known to the early Christians; and that Holy Scripture reveals to us no other way of admission into the visible company of Christians—these were the conclusions at which we arrived in our last chapter. We saw that the baptized, whether of Church or Chapel, had, and the unbaptized had not, been "grafted into the *body* of CHRIST'S church." The question which now presents itself for consideration is this: What persons, if any, have been *put out*, or *have taken themselves out*, of the church or congregation of Christian people? In other words:

[1] *In theory* any member of the Christian society (*i.e.*, the church) may admit members. But in practice, it is found expedient, except in cases of urgent necessity, to limit this authority to the *officers* (*i.e.*, the ministers) of the society. All the same, if any ordinary member (in other words, any lay person) *does* baptize, in the manner which the Head of the society prescribed, such baptism is valid, and is on no account to be repeated. *Fieri non debet, factum valet*, is the Church's rule. It follows therefore that all duly baptized Nonconformists have been *admitted* into the Christian Church.

Have Nonconformists been *excommunicated?* or if not, have they by their joining the private societies and communions which they call, and honestly believe to be, "churches," *cut themselves off* from the "one body" of the Lord? Let us take the question of excommunication in this chapter.

But here I am reminded that the very mention of that word will provoke a derisive smile. "Excommunication" has long since become a favourite subject for a jest. And yet excommunication is recognised in the Bible, beyond all question, as part of the machinery of the church of CHRIST. Provision was made for its exercise by our LORD Himself, and, as we shall see presently, instances of its exercise by His Apostle St. Paul are recorded in the sacred page.

St. Matt. xviii. 17, 18. 1 Cor. v 4, 5; 1 Tim. i. 20.

And that is not all. For *every* society, whether religious or secular, must, in the nature of things, have power to deal with contumacious or apostate members. No society can well cohere together, much less fulfil its mission effectively, if it has not the power to *exclude* members as well as to admit them. Without this provision, it may very soon find itself reduced to impotence, if not to a state of chaos. And so it will be found that voluntary bodies like the Wesleyans or the Plymouth Brethren claim and exercise the right of excommunication, though they prefer to call it by a different name, viz., "expulsion." And this right has been freely exercised by them within comparatively recent years.[1] So we find again that in the Jewish church, though this power of exclusion is not referred to in the account which Scripture gives of its constitution, yet as years passed by, the necessity for its exercise became apparent, and instances of its exercise are mentioned. One such case is that of the man born blind who was "cast out" —was "put out of the synagogue," which was one form

[1] Some thousands of members were "expelled" from the "Wesleyan Methodist *Society*" in 1849. These were the members first of the "Wesleyan Reformers," and then of the "United Methodist Free *Church*."

CHAP. XI.

of excommunication. Our LORD Himself refers to the exercise of this discipline, and we know that the dread of this effective weapon prevented even "chief rulers" from confessing Him. That in these particular instances the power was *misused*, says nothing against its proper use; still less does it prove that a society such as the church can well exist without it. The common sneer against "excommunication," therefore, can only proceed from ignorance of its meaning and necessity.[1]

St. John ix. 22, 34, 35. St. John xvi. 2. St. John xii. 42.

But be this as it may, one thing is certain, that the church of CHRIST was invested with this power of exclusion by the church's Head—her Divine LORD. He only mentioned "the church" by that name twice—in its Christian shape it was not then founded, and moreover He preferred to speak of it as a "kingdom;" but it is significant that in one of these two passages He refers to the penalty of excommunication. For not only did He ordain that the man who refused to hear the church should be treated by every Christian "as the Gentile and the publican," that is to say, as a Pagan, altogether *outside* the Christian congregation—but He goes on in the next verse to say that the sentences and decrees of the church on earth, its "bindings" and "loosings," should be ratified in heaven. He assumed, that is, that the church would not permit any member to defy its authority with impunity, but would disown such member by a formal act of exclusion. (Comp. 1 Cor. v. 4, "When ye are gathered together," &c.) For unless we understand the church, in the case contemplated, to proceed to excommunicate the offender, there is no connection between verses 17 and 18; no reason for this mention of "binding," &c. Besides, it is obvious that if every member of the church treated the offender "as a heathen and a publican"—and this our LORD says each member is to do—such offender would forthwith be practically, if not formally, excommunicated, *i.e.*, he would be put *out of communion* with the church. It is clear then that

St. Matt. xvi. 18; xviii. 17.

St. Matt. xviii. 18.

[1] *Damnant quod non intelligunt.*

excommunication is no invention of the dark ages—however the dark ages may have abused it—but has the express sanction of the Eternal Son of GOD.

But if we are still in any doubt on this subject, the action of St. Paul should set the question at rest. It is admitted that he delivered first the incestuous Corinthian and then Hymenæus and Alexander "unto Satan." But it is doubtful whether by "delivery unto Satan" he meant more than excommunication—that is to say, exclusion from the kingdom of GOD's dear Son, for according to him, to be out of that kingdom is to be left "to the power of darkness," to "the power of Satan." So we gather from Col. i. 13, 14—observe, "delivered us out of the power of darkness;" Acts xxvi. 18, "from the power of Satan unto GOD;" and Eph. vi. 12. Excommunication is certainly the punishment he denounces against obstinate heretics elsewhere (in Tit. iii. 10). Anyhow, it is clear that if "delivery unto Satan" means *more* than exclusion from the church—and the "destruction of the flesh" mentioned in 1 Cor. v. 5 may point to more—it means this at least. We find St. Paul accordingly recommending, and himself exercising, the discipline of excommunication, and so we see how *he* interpreted our LORD's words; we see him exercising "the power of the keys," and remitting or retaining as his LORD ordained.

St. Matt xvi. 19. St. John xx. 23.

The church, then, has the power to exclude contumacious members from her communion. She has it as an organised society, as a corporation, as a school. She also has it by the appointment of our LORD and His Apostles. Has then the Church in England exercised this power and excluded Nonconformists? It has recently been suggested that she has. I shall be referred to the Canons of 1604, and especially to Canons ix. and x. I cite the former: "Whosoever shall hereafter separate themselves from the communion of saints, as it is approved by the Apostles' rules, in the Church of England, and combine themselves together in a new brotherhood, accounting the Christians who are conform-

CHAP. XI. able to the doctrine, government, rites, and ceremonies of the Church of England to be profane and unmeet for them to join with in Christian profession, let them be excommunicated *ipso facto*," &c. Now, whether Nonconformists answer to this description[1] it is perhaps needless to discuss, for certainly, whether they do so or not, no man by English law, ecclesiastical as well as civil, is to be deemed guilty of any offence, much less be subjected to pains and penalties for that offence, until he has been *tried* for it. It is not the custom of the English, any more than of the Romans, "to give up any man, before that the accused have the accusers face to face, and have license to answer for himself," &c. No excommunication takes effect until a man has first been *found guilty in the proper court, and sentence has been pronounced in that court.* It is clear therefore that Nonconformists, whether deserving of excommunication or not—and of course there are Nonconformists and Nonconformists — have never been excommunicated, and therefore that such Nonconformists as have been *admitted* by the rite of baptism into the church have never been *put out* of the church, but are, so far as any act of the church is concerned, Churchmen[2] still.

Acts xxv. 16.

But even if all English Nonconformists, amounting say to two-fifths of English Christians, even if they have been excommunicated by the church *en masse*, without a hearing, without sentence—which is too absurd to be entertained for a moment—they are still, though excommunicate, members of the church. For "excommunication"—I again quote the judicious Hooker—

[1] It is the constant complaint of Nonconformists that Churchmen will not join with them "in Christian profession." Such persons at least cannot (if they are consistent) regard our rites, doctrines, &c., as profane.

[2] The word "Churchmen" is used here and in the preceding chapter in the original sense of "members of *the* Church," of the one society and body of Christ. It is now commonly restricted (the result of our unhappy divisions) to such members as have not *left* the church. It would be more correct to call these latter "loyal Churchmen."

"shutteth not out clean from the visible church, but only from fellowship with it in holy duties." Excommunication, like the "putting out of the synagogue" in the Jewish church, deprives a man for the time of the benefits and offices of religion, but it does not put an end to his membership. He is a Churchman still, though an excommunicate Churchman. The effect of CHRIST'S ordinance of baptism is not invalidated by any decree of CHRIST'S church. The wilful heretic is a member of the body, though a maimed and diseased member,[1] and as such is to be restored to his place on repentance, without any re-admission by baptism. He is still a subject of CHRIST'S *kingdom*, though in rebellion against his LORD and King. He is still in the *field*, though one of the tares of the field. He is still a member of the *family* and household of GOD, though he is a prodigal son. The case is exactly parallel to that of a Freemason, who may be expelled from his lodge, but remains a Freemason for life. So that every way and on all grounds it is clear that baptized Nonconformists have not been, and cannot be, put out of, and wholly deprived of their membership in the church. Whether they have taken themselves out is the next subject for our consideration.

[1] *Sunt in ecclesia, quamvis non salubriter in ecclesia.*

CHAPTER XII.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP—III.

"Heretics, as touching those points of doctrine in which they fail; schismatics, as touching the quarrels for which, or the duties in which, they divide themselves from their brethren; loose, licentious, and wicked persons, as touching their several offences or crimes, *have all forsaken the true Church of God*—the church which is sound and sincere in the doctrine which they corrupt; the church that keepeth the bond of unity which they violate; the church which walketh in the laws of righteousness which they transgress—*this very true Church of Christ they have left:* howbeit, not altogether left nor forsaken simply the church, upon the foundation of which *they continue built, notwithstanding these breaches whereby they are rent at the top.*"—*Hooker.*

Have English Nonconformists, those who make up our two hundred and twenty sects and denominations, be the same more or less, Baptists, Romanists, Congregationalists and the like, by any *act of their own*, as, for example, by their open repudiation of the church's ministry and sacraments, or by their submission to a foreign and intrusive prelate, or by their erection of chapels and altars hard by the churches and altars of the "one body," or even by an openly proclaimed and inveterate hostility to the church, where such hostility exists—have they thereby *cut themselves off* from that one body? have they completely severed their connection with it? so that, though *admitted* into the catholic church by baptism, they are now members of that church no longer, or, what is the same thing, of that *part* of the catholic or universal society which is rooted in the soil

of England?—this is the question which now demands our careful consideration. CHAP. XII

For example: Have the Independents, the oldest of English sects,[1] whose origin dates from about A.D. 1568, and who withdrew from the church because in their opinion the Reformation had not gone far enough; or the Romanists who seceded two or three years later (when Pius V. excommunicated Queen Elizabeth, absolved her subjects from their allegiance, and forbade them, under pain of anathema, to obey her behests), because in their opinion the Reformation had gone too far; or the Wesleyans (whose defection dates from 1795), many of whom even now repudiate the name of Nonconformists; or have the Bible Christians, who date from 1815, or the Wesleyan Reformers (1849), whose original quarrel was with Wesleyanism, not with the Church—each of whom separated, *i.e.*, from a sect—have any or all of these ceased to be Churchmen; are they now *within* or *outside* the world-wide fold or congregation of Christ, one branch of which has now for over seventeen centuries been planted in this land?

1. It is admitted by intelligent Churchmen—and this part of my argument is especially addressed to English Churchmen—that *even a vicious and profligate life does not separate from the visible church.* That it separates from the *soul* of the church, from the inner and invisible circle of *true* Christians, is beyond all doubt; on that point, happily, we are all agreed. Like Simon Magus, the evil-liver has "neither part nor lot in this matter:" if in the church, he is only there to his greater condemnation. But the question remains: "Does a bad life, of itself, exclude a man from the community of Christians? does depravity on the part of any member put an end *ipso facto* to his membership?" To those

[1] I do not use the word in any offensive sense, nor does it really and strictly convey any such meaning, for "sect" would seem to be derived from *sequor, secutus,* and would therefore mean "a following;" not from *seco, sectum,* which would give the meaning, "a part cut off."

CHAP. XII. who believe in a *visible* church and a church which at all resembles a "net cast into the sea and gathering of *every kind*," only one answer is possible—the answer which has long since been given by the great divines of Christendom. Moral depravity, even notorious unclean living, though doubtless it should bring excommunication in its train, does not unchurch a Churchman. For if it did, then there would be no *bad fish* in the net, no *tares* in the field, no *prodigal sons* in the family of the great Father. Nay, a further question might present itself, namely, this:—whether any one was left in the church at all? For if depravity, if sin, separates from the church, who can be sure that he himself belongs to it? It will hardly be maintained that some degrees of sin do, and other and "lesser" degrees of sin do not, effect the exclusion, for who is to draw the line and say what sins are great and what sins are little? It is very significant that in the list of the "seven deadly sins" "pride" occupies the first place, and "covetousness" the second. It has been pointed out[1] that a spirit of "watchful jealousy," on which some Nonconforming Christians pique themselves, "is in the view of Christianity a more direct spiritual hindrance than drunkenness or loose living." Besides, the very identical sin which is heinous in one man may be comparatively venial in another; its quality depends on circumstances, on the motives, surroundings, temptations, parentage, constitution, education, of those who commit it. No one, therefore, could possibly define the *amount* of depravity which should exclude from the church. Nor can it be pretended that *notorious* sin does, and that *secret* sin does not, cast out of the community, for that would be to impute unfairness to the Divine decrees. In that case a man's membership in the Divine society would in many cases depend on his success in concealing his guilt, on his adding duplicity to his other sins. No, it cannot be seriously argued that *sin* excludes from the "body"

[1] By Matthew Arnold, quoted by Curteis.

of Him who came to save sinners. It did not cut off from the Jewish church, else where would David have been? It does not of itself cut off from the religious "bodies" by which we are surrounded. According to Mr. Spurgeon, who in his sermon on baptismal regeneration laughs over the idea of "baptized drunkards and harlots" being "members of CHRIST's body," the teaching of certain Baptist and Congregationalist ministers at the present time "reeks before heaven." Yet the Baptist or the Wesleyan who is guilty of this offence, or who commits a crime, remains a member of that body until, by some formal action on his part or on the part of the authorities, he is put out. It is clear, therefore, as already stated, that even notorious evil living does not *ipso facto* separate from the visible church. Just as a wicked Freemason is still a Freemason, just as a prodigal son is still a son, just as a rebellious subject is still a subject, so a "brother that walketh disorderly" is still a *brother*, and is to be admonished *as* a brother; so a dissolute, drunken Christian is still a Christian, though he is to be shunned and reprobated: so an incestuous Churchman is still a Churchman, notwithstanding his detestable crime. Though the church only exists, or primarily exists, "to make men good," yet being a visible community, with its form of admission, its badge of membership, &c., no amount of badness can *ipso facto* obliterate a member's name.

2 Thess. iii. 6, 15; 1 St. John v. 16. 1 Cor. v. 2; 1 Thess. iv. 4–6. 1 Cor. v. 1 2.

2. It is also allowed by our soundest divines that *heresy does not exclude from the church.* Here again I may remark, in passing, that however impatient the world of to-day may be of the very mention of this word, and however insignificant our misbeliefs may be in its eyes, the matter is not treated so lightly in Holy Scripture. The spirit of the age, it seems to me, will pardon almost any belief, provided it is *sufficiently vague.* It is only when you demand clear statements in theology that it takes alarm and talks about liberality—liberality meaning all the while making free with what is not ours, but CHRIST's. Not that we forget, however, that

CHAP. XII. the church, in some of her branches, has only herself to thank that this word "heresy" stinks in the nostrils of men. They cannot forget her inquisitions, her *autos da fé*, her Torquemadas. It is "the light of burning heretics" has taught them to loathe the very name. The pendulum has swung to the opposite extreme. All the same, if there is any truth in Holy Scripture, "heresy," the deliberate picking and *choosing* our doctrines for ourselves instead of *accepting* them as handed down from our LORD and His Apostles,[1] is a sin—a sin which merits anathema and excommunication. Still it does not of itself separate from the church; if it did, the heretic would not need to be "rejected," nor would there be any opportunity for that "first and second admonition" of which St. Paul speaks as preliminaries to his rejection. Besides, if heresy *did* put an end to membership in the "body," what would follow? Why this, that errors in belief accomplished what the most vicious and shameless living could not effect, namely, *ipso facto* exclusion from the church. "We must therefore"—with our incomparable Hooker—"acknowledge even heretics themselves to be, though a maimed part, yet a part of the visible church."

Gal. i. 8, v. 20; 2 Pet. ii. 1; 1 Cor. xi. 19.

Tit. iii. 10.

3. And if *heresy* does not separate from the church, and even *profligacy* does not terminate our membership, can it be believed that mere *schism* does? For schism is allowed to be not only less serious, but also to be less opposed to the kingdom of heaven than either heresy or profligacy. But here the question arises, *What is schism?* The word is a Scriptural one—the thing is condemned in Scripture; but what is that thing? Not necessarily entire severance *from* the "body," but a split or division created *in* the body. This is clear from some of the passages just cited. The "rent" or "tear" was in the garment; the "division" was in the crowd, &c. It is still more clear from the use of the cognate verb, which is used of the *rending* of the veil and of the rocks, of

St. Matt. ix. 16. (here translated "rent"). St. John vii. 43; ix. 16. (here "division") 1 Cor. i. 10; xi. 18; xii. 25, &c.

[1] "Heresy" strictly means "choice," and is the sin of *selecting* dogmas which suit us.

the *opening* of the heavens, of the *breaking* of the net, &c. The word "schism," consequently, does not *per se* imply any actual severance from the church; it is always used of divisions within the church. The Corinthians are taxed with "schisms" by St. Paul, but there had been no separation from the church at Corinth—that is clear from chap. i. 2—only parties and factions within it (chap. iii. 4). "Schism" then means a tear, or rent, or division *in* the society, and does not by any means convey that schismatics are cut off or excluded from its membership.[1] What heresy could not do, what even criminality could not effect, schism cannot accomplish—the severance of the baptized from the body. I conclude, therefore, that Nonconformists, even when undoubted schismatics, even when they would be right glad, if they could, to rend the church in pieces, have not succeeded, despite all their efforts, in detaching themselves from the one only church of CHRIST, but are Churchmen, albeit schismatical Churchmen, still. They have made breaches in the church; they have seamed it through and through with divisions; they have put themselves out of its benefits; but they have not broken off one soul from it.

CHAP. XII.

1 Cor. xii. 25. St. Matt. xxvii. 51. St. Mark i. 10. St. John xxi. 11. 1 Cor. xi. 18.

And if this conclusion is true of the most virulent and rancorous Nonconformists, it is assuredly no less true of that infinitely greater class who are Nonconformists by mere accident; who have no quarrel with the church, no objection to her doctrines, no trace of the spirit of schism. They have joined one of the voluntary societies called "churches"—or perhaps they were born in it, and so have stuck to it—from the highest and purest of motives; such as, for example, because they "got good there;" because they believed it to be the place to which GOD had called them; because it never occurred to them that (having been such a blessing to

[1] Nonconformists generally define "schism" as mere "variance," "strife," &c., as, *e.g.*, Dr. Dykes, "The Christian Church," pp. 183–186. But this is obviously a "a private interpretation," suggested by the exigencies of controversy. The Revised Version lends it no countenance.

CHAP. XII. them) it might not be a true "church." Their lives and characters are often such as Churchmen may well envy: not a syllable can be said against them, except that they are "Dissenters." Can we believe that a mere error of judgment or mere ignorance of church history *ipso facto* severs them from the body? Nay, they may be erring and mistaken, but they are still Churchmen; unconscious but veritable members of the only church the world has known or can know.

The conclusion at which we arrive in brief is this, that the brand of baptism, like that of circumcision, is indelible.[1] Once in the church, always in the church, unless perhaps in the case of open and avowed infidelity. Not always intelligently, or virtuously, or profitably, or Scripturally, but still always in the visible church, even if in profligacy, or heresy, or schism. Not entitled to the benefits and privileges of the church, but still subject to its responsibilities. It sounds a ridiculous paradox—but paradoxes are sometimes true—that most "Dissenters" are "Churchmen"—unconscious but actual Churchmen, by virtue of the "one baptism" of CHRIST, by virtue of that rite which it is often considered a mark of spirituality to disparage, but which, nevertheless, was ordained by GOD manifest in the flesh.

[1] Now we can understand why an ordinance like baptism is ranked with the "one Lord," "one faith," "one spirit;" why our Master, who was so set against forms, nevertheless grafted *this* form upon His spiritual religion.

CHAPTER XIII.

NONCONFORMISTS UNCONSCIOUS CHURCHMEN.

"Why do we dispute concerning our inheritance? We are brethren, why do we strive together? Our Father hath not left us without a *Testament.*"—*St. Augustine.*

Does the conclusion at which we arrived in our last chapter, viz., that baptized Nonconformists, despite their nonconformity, are nevertheless Churchmen, in the widest and oldest sense of that word—in the sense of belonging to *the* church, the one only community of Christian men—does this seem altogether too broad and too paradoxical? It is at any rate the conclusion to which an independent study of Holy Scripture has conducted us. And it is a conclusion which we find confirmed (or rather anticipated) by the very first divines of Christendom, and notably by Augustine[1] and our own Hooker, as the extracts from his writings already given prove. It is also the view taken of their position by the law of the land, which in this respect is nothing else than the law of the church. So that we have arrived at last at an answer to these two questions—of such unique importance as between Church and Chapel:—"What is a Churchman?" and "Where is the church?" A "Churchman," strictly speaking, is nothing else than a "Christian," and a "Christian" is a *professed follower of Christ*, one who has been "made a disciple" of Christ (however *unworthy* a disciple) in the way which Christ Himself appointed, the way of baptism, and has not openly and deliberately renounced his St. Matt. xxviii. 19.

[1] *E.g.*, "*Hæretici aliquo modo sunt in ecclesia.*"—*De Bapt.*, iii. c. 19.

CHAP. XIII.

baptism, has not wilfully and publicly apostatised from CHRIST. Such person, though he *may* be vicious, profane, superstitious, schismatical; though he *must* always be more or less ignorant and more or less imperfect and sinful, is nevertheless a Christian and a Churchman. A "Christian" because he has been christened (*i.e.*, Christianed) and has not since been unchristened; a Churchman because he has been admitted into the church, and has not subsequently been excluded from it. Similarly "the church" must be defined as the *whole company* of *baptized Christians*, good, bad, and indifferent, orthodox and heterodox, spiritual and carnal, conforming and nonconforming. All these have been *called*, though all have not been *chosen*. All these together make up the *school* of CHRIST, though comparatively few of them may be apt and docile scholars. These are the guests, both bad and good, that furnish the wedding; these are the fish, both good and bad, that fill the net. In no other way can we define "the church," if our definition is to agree with Holy Scripture, or indeed with the logic of fact, for the voluntary bodies commonly called "the churches" are themselves inevitably mixed and made up of good and bad. The straitest communion, which rigorously excludes all the "unconverted," sometimes has to expel its black sheep, and a "walled garden"—*teste* Mr. Spurgeon—is not proof against thieves without and spoilers within. "In the visible church the evil be ever mingled with the good."

St. Matt. xxii. 11. St. Matt. xiii. 48.

Article XXVI.

So that, unless these conclusions can be refuted and these definitions overruled—which, seeing that they are the conclusions and, in substance, the definitions of Catholic Christendom, is not likely — *Nonconformists are in the church.* Misguided members, if you like; possibly wilful, obstinate, rebellious members sometimes, but members still. I propose in the remaining chapters of this *Eirenicon* to appeal to them as such; to consider them as unconscious Churchmen, who, unhappily, as I think, have strayed from catholicity into sectarianism; who, under what seem to me mistaken ideas of duty

and erroneous conceptions of Christianity, have become alienated and half separated from the "one body" of their baptism; and I shall ask them—I shall plead with them in the name of our common Saviour, our common faith and hope, our common warfare against evil—calmly and prayerfully to consider whether there are really any valid and sufficient reasons why they should stand aloof any longer from that body of which they are members; whether their objections to the doctrine and discipline of the church in England (or, to be more exact, that part of the church in England which has *never separated from anybody*) are well founded; and, if they *are* well founded, whether they are still such as to justify the perpetuation of divisions, such as to warrant their rejecting the one body recognised in Scripture as "the pillar and ground of the truth" for the hundred and one bodies which reflect the varied and changing opinions of men: whether, if they must have societies (such as the Wesleyan) supplementary to the church, they cannot agree to have them, not in opposition to, but in harmony with, the one church of the living GOD in this land?

But before I embark on this inquiry, there is one objection which has been recently raised, and which must be faced. It may be stated thus: "The object of the church, its *raison d'être*, as all will allow, is the glory of GOD and the good of man. It was founded, it exists, to witness for GOD, to fight against evil, to spread the truth, to make men holy. Such are the purposes for which a church is needed. And yet you ask us to believe that the body which perhaps has done least till comparatively late years to promote these blessed objects is '*the* church,' and that other bodies, which confessedly have been amongst the most earnest in pursuing and the most successful in attaining these objects, are not 'churches' at all. Take, for example, the Wesleyans or the Congregationalists. Whether you consider their rapid growth,[1] the labours of their ministers, or the character

[1] The Wesleyans claim to number about a million in Great

CHAP. XIII.

and piety of their members; whether you regard their generous and sometimes munificent gifts, their splendid missionary undertakings both at home and abroad, and the trophies they have won for CHRIST in the lives they have sweetened and glorified, they will compare favourably with the members of the Church of England, and yet (you say) the latter represents the one church of CHRIST in this realm, and the former are only 'societies' and NOT 'churches' at all. It is one of your contentions that 'no man can found a new church.' In that case Wesley could not, and the body that bears his name —a body which actually arose out of the deadness or coldness of the church—in spite of its distinguished services to religion; in spite of the indubitable success with which GOD has crowned its enterprises, is at best a *spurious* church, and its claim to be considered a church is entirely opposed to the divine will and purpose. We cannot believe this for a moment, and even to maintain such a proposition seems to us to savour of presumption."

I shall hope to deal with this objection in the next chapter.

Britain. In America they are said to have two millions in their "church membership."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MARKS OF THE CHURCH.

"The visibility of the church consists in positive institutions. Take away everything of this kind, and you lose the notion itself."—*Bishop Butler.*

If Christians are ever to be reunited, one of the first questions to be settled is this: Can piety, can success, by themselves constitute a church? If a body of Christians exhibits the Christian graces which the church exists to cultivate, and prosecutes successfully the enterprises which the church was founded to maintain, is it thereby proven that that community is a separate "church of the living God"?

For these two marks of the Church—marks which of course every church *should* possess—are constantly quoted, as if they were the *only* and the *invariable* marks of a church; as if no community of Christians could be a church without them, and as if every community which possesses them must necessarily be a church. This has been done recently by a dignitary of the English Church,[1] whose character and attainments alike command our respect. "If," he has said, "that is a true church to which God sets His seal in the conversion of the world, then who shall deny the name of 'churches' to the Nonconformist bodies of England? If so, must we not acknowledge the Wesleyan Church as a branch of Christ's Holy Catholic Church, when its missionaries, with their lives in their hands, have converted the cannibals of Fiji? Must we not accept the Baptist

[1] Dr. Perowne, Dean of Peterborough.

CHAP. XIV.

Church as a true branch of CHRIST's Holy Church, when its missionaries gave to India the first translation of the Scriptures into a native dialect? Must we not accept the Congregationalist Churches as parts of the Catholic church, when the martyrs of Madagascar were the seal and crown of the missionaries of the London Missionary Society? To me," he proceeds to add, "it is amazing that men should put organisation before life," &c. And that this is the opinion of most Nonconformists need hardly be said. *Ubi Christus, ibi ecclesia*—"where CHRIST is, there the Church is"—this is their idea. I submit, however, that these views will not bear careful examination.

But before we enter on this examination, it is necessary to refer for a moment to the Nineteenth Article, for this is constantly cited as a definition which allows the claim of the Nonconforming bodies to be "churches." "The visible Church of CHRIST is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure Word of GOD is preached, and the sacraments be duly ministered, according to CHRIST's ordinance," &c.

Now, it is quite needless for us to consider whether "the *pure* Word of GOD is preached in Dissenting chapels or not—Mr. Spurgeon says this is very far from being the case—or whether "the sacraments be *duly* ministered" or not, because the Article is obviously *a definition of the one church* of CHRIST, and as it does not contemplate, so it cannot cover any second or rival church. The title is clear and unmistakable: "Of the church." So are the initial words, "*The* visible church of CHRIST," not "*A* visible church," as the words are constantly misquoted.[1] It is true we read later on of "the church of Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch," &c., for the universal church is made up of so many local or national churches, but still only of *one* church at Jerusalem, *one* church at Antioch, &c. To cover Nonconformist societies, the article must be entirely rewrit-

[1] As, for example, by Mr. R. F. Horton in his recent "Appeal to Wavering Nonconformists," p. 27.

ten. The title would have to be "Of the churches," and the definition must either run, "*A* visible church," &c., or "Visible churches are congregations," &c. As it now stands, it can only mean "The one Church of CHRIST is the one congregation of," &c.[1] The fact is, men have been misled by the word "congregation" (*coetus*), which they have taken in its modern sense, of an assembly collected for worship, whereas it is here used in the ancient and Bible meaning of the whole people, the entire flock of GOD. See, for example, Exod. xii. 6; Lev. iv. 13, x. 17; Judges xx. 1, xxi. 10; Numb. xvi. 3; Nehem. xiii. 1; Psa. xxii. 22, lxxiv. 2. And the expression "faithful men" (*fidelium*) has been equally misconceived. It simply means men who hold the faith, *i.e.*, who profess and call themselves Christians, as in Eph. i. 1, Col. i. 2, &c., not "believers" in the conventional sense of the word. It is clear, then, that the Article does not recognise any church except *The* church; clear that it does not see in the preaching or piety of Nonconformist bodies proofs that we have two or two hundred visible churches in England.

But let us now turn to Dr. Perowne. Perhaps we shall best meet his contention by asking a few questions of our own.

1. *Was there a Christian church in Sardis, in Thyatira, or in Laodicea?* The popular view—*Ubi Christus, ibi ecclesia*—according to which a community is no church which is not composed of living Christians, or which has lost the "mind of CHRIST," would, if consistent, say emphatically "No." What! call *that* a church which had "a name to live and *was dead*," and *none* of whose works were fulfilled before God! Call *that* a church which had but "a few names which did not defile their garments," or that, the members of which were "taught to commit fornication." "No, a thousand

Rev. iii. 1.
Rev. iii. 4.
Rev. iii. 2, Rev. Ver.
Rev. ii. 20

[1] The Seventh Article of the Confession of Augsburg, from which our Nineteenth Article is taken, makes this quite clear. "There is one Holy Church to abide for ever, and the Church is a congregation," &c.

CHAP. XIV.

times no," the Baptist,[1] the Congregationalist,[2] will cry, "*Ubi Christus, ibi ecclesia!*" "No," says Mr. Horton, "a man who is not 'born again'[3] cannot be counted a member of the church." "No," Dr. Perowne should, if consistent, echo: "Life must be considered, not organisation." And yet CHRIST Himself *did* call each of these a "church," notwithstanding; each, *i.e.*, was an integral part of the Catholic society in the sight of Him whose "eyes are as a flame of fire.

2. Is piety or devotion, or successful work proof in itself that a man is a "Christian"? All Christians, even the Friends, must say no—if, that is to say, they are content to take the Bible *as it stands*, and do not unconsciously revise it to suit their preconceived ideas. For not only does that book distinctly mention a formal rite —the ordinance of baptism—as having *something* to do with a man's being a Christian or disciple of CHRIST, but obviously some sort of *profession* is necessary to make a man a Christian. For if not, then Sir Moses Montefiore was a Christian, then pious and zealous and successful Mohammedans or Buddhists are Christians. If, therefore, something more than piety or zeal or the most eminent success is needed to constitute the individual Christian, surely it is a fair presumption that something more will be needed—yes, something formal —to define and constitute the Christian *community*. Just as a Jew who exhibits Christian virtues is not thereby proved to be a Christian, so neither is a community proved by its virtues to be a Christian church.

St. Matt. xxviii. 19; St. Mark xvi. 16; St. John iii. 5, iv. 1, &c. St. Luke xii. 8; Rom. x. 9, 10; 1 Tim. vi. 12; Heb. iii. 1, iv. 14, &c.

3. *Are any number of Christian graces or any amount*

[1] A Confession of Faith, submitted to a recent (December 13, 1887) meeting of the Baptist Union, says that a "profession of having undergone a spiritual change" is "the fundamental principle of their Church polity."

[2] The candidate for church membership must "narrate the story of his awakening to religious consciousness."—*Dr. R. W. Dale.*

[3] According to Mr. Horton (p. 27), men are "born again by *faith in Christ*." But according to CHRIST Himself, they are "born again of *water and the Spirit*."

of missionary successes proofs in themselves that this or that body is a part (say) *of the Wesleyan Society?* Why, no; of course they are not. If the body in question *is* a branch of the Wesleyan Society, or a complete Wesleyan Society, it will be able to furnish objective and tangible proofs. The Conference would make short work of the plea *Ubi Christus, ibi societas.* Then why should such graces or such successes be alleged as conclusive proofs that this or that body is a part of the universal church, which, as Wesleyans themselves must maintain, is a society similar, in all its visible properties, to the Wesleyan Society? It is affirmed that the piety or missionary spirit of its members proves the Congregationalist or Baptist church at N—— to be a "part of the Catholic church," yet no man or body of men accepts these tokens as proofs that this community is a "Baptist" or "Congregationalist" church. It may be said that the "Baptist Church" has *marks* which distinguish it from other churches. Precisely so. And all our contention is that the Catholic society has marks, similar marks, which distinguish it from other societies.

4. *Is the Church Missionary Society, the Bible Society, or the London Missionary Society, a true branch of Christ's Holy Church.* The Dean of Peterborough would say "No;" even Nonconformists would say "No." But we are entitled to ask them: "On your own grounds, why not? Is it that the Bible Society or the Church Missionary Society *has not Christ?*" (*Ubi Christus*, &c.) Each of these missionary societies, moreover, exists for the same purposes for which the church exists; each has done its church-like work with eminent success; why then is it to be branded as a "society" and denied the name of a "church"? Let us borrow and apply Dr. Perowne's own words: "If that is a true church to which God sets His seal in the conversion of the world, then who shall deny the name of church to the"—*Church Missionary Society!* Or again: "Must we not accept the"—*Bible Society* "as a true branch of Christ's

CHAP. XIV.

Holy Church when its agents gave to (say) China the first translation of the Scriptures," &c.! Assuredly, if the test is to be translations of the Scriptures, the Bible Society has as good a title to the name of "church" as the Baptist body. And if the "Congregationalist churches" are to be "accepted as parts of the Catholic church" because of their connection with the London Missionary Society—which simply means that *some* of their members are subscribers, as I believe some Churchmen are—because of their slight connection, I repeat, with a society whose missionaries years ago instructed the Malagasy martyrs, how much greater is the claim of that missionary society itself! No, the Dean's argument *proves too much*. Does he reply that not one of these societies even *claims* to be a church? Is it the *claim* then that makes all the difference? Or does he say that none of these Christian organisations, albeit it is doing the very work the church exists to do, has *the marks* of a church. Now at last we are agreed. We are agreed that zeal and devotion and piety are *not* in themselves sufficient proofs that every Christian society which possesses them is entitled to the name of "church"—which is the very point in dispute.

But let us further ask—

5. *Is the Salvation Army*, or, let us say, *is the Church Army, a "true branch of Christ's Holy Church"?* I imagine that the former, and I know that the latter, would eagerly repudiate the name. And yet they were both founded for the same reasons that the church was founded for; they exist for no other ends and objects than the church exists for. The work they are doing is the very work that the church does or ought to do. Then, *Are they churches? yes or no?* If you say "No, they are not," then we want to know why neither of these is a church, and yet the Wesleyan body is; a body the origin of which was every way similar to that of the "Church Army" (only that it called itself a "Society," and not an "Army"), and the objects of which are the same. True, the armies, as already observed, do not

claim to be churches, but neither did the Wesleyan "societies"—indeed, they have never *formally* claimed the name, which they have gradually adopted, up to the present time. Why, then, is the one a church and the other not? It cannot be because "the pure Word of GOD" is preached in the one and not in the other, for the message of the first is the same, in its main features, as the message of the second. It cannot be that the soldiers of the Army are not as zealous as the members of the Society; it cannot be that the labours of the former are not so successful as those of the latter, or that the growth has not been so rapid, or the change in the converts so marked. Is it then that the Society ministers the sacraments and that the Army does not? Well, in that case, it is perfectly clear that something more than mere goodness and zeal and success is necessary to prove a community to be a church. But in that case what becomes of the canon, *Ubi Christus, ibi ecclesia?* Now, we are told, it is a question of forms, of sacraments; that as soon as the Army follows in the steps of the Methodist societies, and sets up for being a church, by adding the ministry of the sacraments to that of the word, and by making (or calling) its officers ministers, it will be a true and lawful church of CHRIST forthwith; the "Church Army," that is to say, will then become the "Church Church!" Even if it should take this step because the relations of headquarters with the rulers of the church had become strained; even if this new departure were the outcome of mere professional jealousy and the result of many bitter wranglings, still the Army would then be a complete though self-constituted "church," according to the mind of CHRIST and the rule of the New Testament. Do you hesitate to accept this conclusion—a conclusion which involves these two consequences at least; first, that brand-new churches can be formed at an hour's notice, in any number and on almost any lines, at the pleasure or caprice of one or two able and ambitious men; and, secondly, that in order to be a church, men have only to usurp

CHAP. XIV.

the functions of *the* church? Is this carrying it too far? Then why do you contend that the Wesleyan body, the "Primitives," and the Methodist New Connexion are true and lawful churches? The Army would only have followed their example; it would be strictly adhering to precedent. The history of secession would only be repeating itself.

6. *When did* (say) *the Wesleyan Methodist Society*[1] *become the Wesleyan Methodist Church?* Will you tell us at what point and by what act a society, formed within the church, composed of members of the church, designed, like the "Society for the Reformation of Manners," the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge and others, to promote a revival of religion in the hearts and lives of Churchmen, became itself a *church?* When and by what act did the *ecclesiola* become a full-blown *ecclesia?* We all know that it was not during the lifetime of its founder. "Warn all our people," he wrote in 1749, "against calling our society 'a church' or 'the church,' and against calling our preachers 'ministers.'" And only two years before his death Wesley said,[2] "The Methodists are *still members of the church*—such they desire to live and to die. . . . I *dare* not separate from the church; I believe it would be a sin so to do." Only a few months before the end came he wrote,[3] "I declare that I live and die a member of the Church of England, and none who regard my opinion or advice will ever separate from it." It is clear then that the "society" was not transformed into a "church" so long as Wesley lived. Was it in 1795, when the Conference authorised its preachers to administer the Lord's Supper in certain chapels? If Wesleyans say, "Yes, that was the date," then I answer, (1) that by their own showing, something more is needed than mere piety and success to make a church; (2) that by their own showing their "church"

[1] *Ex uno disce omnes.*
[2] In a sermon preached at Bath in 1789.
[3] In the *Arminian Magazine* for April 1790.

owes its origin to a mere *claim*—to a resolution of the Conference; (3) that by the same process—the stroke of a pen—any number of churches may be created. Any three disaffected Wesleyans have but to draw up a fresh minute, and a fresh "church" springs into existence. But *did* this action of the Conference in 1795, in the opinion of Methodists themselves, convert their societies into a church? If it did, then how do they explain the fact that neither then, nor for a long time afterwards, did they ever call their society a church; and the further fact that up to the present moment, as remarked above, the name of church has never been formally claimed for it, and that numbers of Wesleyans still protest that they are not Nonconformists? No, neither the leaders of Methodism nor yet the learned Dean can tell us *when* the Wesleyan society passed into the Wesleyan Church.

7. *Can a man be a member of two separate and distinct churches of Christ?* Of course he may be a member of any number of voluntary *societies*, but can he be a member of two *Divine* societies or *churches?* Absurd as it may appear, he can, *if* the Wesleyan and other similar societies are churches. A. B. was by baptism admitted—so at least John Wesley teaches, and so most Christians believe—into *the* church, the "one body," the Catholic society. He did not cease to be a member of that universal church—at least it is a bad look out for him if he did—when, a few years later, he joined the "Wesleyan Church," to which he was admitted by handing him a ticket of membership. He is now, consequently, a member of two churches of CHRIST—the Catholic and the Wesleyan churches, which are not even agreed as to the mode of admission to membership.

8. *But*, the Dean objects, *you put organisation before life.* Nay, *we* do not, for we allow that all baptized Nonconformists are members of our church, of the one organisation and body of CHRIST. It is *they* who do this. Whatever "life" and fervour we may possess, neither the Congregationalist, nor the Wesleyan, accepts

CHAP. XIV.

that as a proof of our membership in his religious community? On the contrary, he asks for our credentials, for our "ticket of membership," or other proof of admission. At the most, we only apply to the community the test which *they* apply to the individual. All organised bodies must seem to put organisation before life, if they are to preserve their existence.

9. *But how do you account*, we shall be asked, *for the blessing which has attended the labours of the Congregationalists, Wesleyans, &c., if they are not true churches of Christ?* In the same way that we account for the successes of the Jesuits, of the Salvation Army, &c. GOD'S abounding grace constantly overflows its channels. GOD forbid that we should deny for a moment the good and holy work done for GOD by the various bodies of Nonconformists. Why should we? It is the work of our fellow-Christians, and it is *because they are Christians*, and their societies are societies of unconscious Churchmen, and as such have preached CHRIST, that GOD has blessed it. We account for its success by the fact that it has been a sincere and devout presentment of the Person and Office of CHRIST to the people.[1] But it does not follow from this that the ecclesiastical views of the Wesleyans, any more than those of the Salvationists, are in all points correct.[2] The work of Wesley and the work of Whitfield were alike owned of GOD in the last century, because each was the work of a Christian, and each was wrought for CHRIST. But they cannot both have been right in their opinions, for the one was an Arminian and the other a Calvinist. No, neither piety nor success, as we all know, is any proof of individual orthodoxy; still less are they proofs that *all* the claims, all the heterogeneous and discordant church principles

[1] St. Paul implies (Phil. i. 15) that even preaching "of envy and strife" was not without success.

[2] "The many complications of the Christian life make the apparent favour of GOD a very uncertain standard of the truth of the doctrines believed by those on whom He smiles."—*Professor Beet (Wesleyan).*

of all the various denominations are founded on reason and Scripture.

The visible church, therefore, *must* be a matter of organisation, and not of mere sentiment.[1]

[1] It is often urged against Anglicans that they "unchurch" their fellow-Christians, and sometimes hard and bitter things are said against us for so doing. But to these we may reply, first, that if their position as churches is secure, they need make no complaint at all if others call it in question. They have only to exhibit the evidence, and so silence objectors. The unnecessary warmth with which they resent this, only suggests that there is no evidence. Secondly, the right to call itself a true church of CHRIST has often been denied to the Church of England, and the Church has met this accusation, not by denunciations of "arrogance," "presumption," and the like, but by patiently setting forth her position and claims. "The genuine Puritans," says Mr. Gladstone, "contended against the Prelatical constitution of the Church of England by arguing that the entire constitution of the church was defined in the Word of GOD, and that that constitution was exclusively Presbyterian. This claim," he adds, "was met, not by complaints of its 'unchurching' the Church of England, but by an examination of its matter and foundation." Thirdly, we are not alone in "unchurching" some at least of the denominations. Dr. Dale does the same. "A Christian society," he writes, "which imposes any other conditions of membership than faith in CHRIST [as for example the "Class Meeting"] is a sect. . . . It is a private Christian club. It receives persons into membership not because they are the brethren of Christ, but because they are the brethren of CHRIST professing certain religious opinions or observing certain religious practices. . . . It is a society not for all Christians, but for a particular description of Christians. It is a sect, not a church." But though we dare not call these voluntary organisations "churches," just because they are voluntary and of human origin, and because CHRIST'S church is "one body," we "church" (instead of unchurching) the members, *i.e.*, we claim for them a place in *the* church. They are content to call themselves "joined members" of "Lady Huntingdon's Church," or of the "Wesleyan Church;" we assert that they are by their baptism "joined members" of the *one* Christian church of the land.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PLEA OF NECESSITY.

"I declare once more that I live and die a member of the Church of England, and that none who regard my judgment or advice will ever separate from it."—*John Wesley in* 1789.

THIS is perhaps the most fitting place to consider a defence of secession which has recently been put forth by a scholar of undoubted competence and high character, Professor Beet of the Richmond Wesleyan College. He allows that the church of the New Testament was one body, but pleads in justification of the existence of separate bodies, that is to say, of secession churches, first, that the exigencies of the work of GOD have, in some cases at least, necessitated separation; and, secondly, that the writers of the New Testament did not foresee the corruptions and misbeliefs of the latter days. These are his exact words: "The Wesleyans have never formally called themselves a church. But the necessities of the work of GOD have compelled them to assume the position of an independent church, with all the ordinances committed by CHRIST to His church. In these necessities they recognised the hand of GOD. . . . It is true that the New Testament speaks only of one body. But many things have happened which its writers never foresaw, *e.g.*, the corruptions which occasioned the Protestant secessions, and the events which occasioned English Nonconformity.[1]" Let us now examine these allegations.

1. And first, will the Professor tell us, will anybody

[1] "Church in the West," December 1, 1888.

tell us, what necessities for secession, "necessities of the work of GOD," arose in the eighteenth century, which did not equally exist in the first or the second? If there was persecution at the later period, was there none at the earlier? if the modern church had its imperfections, was the primitive church pure and unspotted? If, therefore, it is an advantage to the work of GOD that the workers in His vineyard, instead of being united as one man, "with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel," should all be at sixes and sevens, split up into camps and coteries, each viewing the rest with "watchful jealousy," and sometimes with ill-concealed hostility, then why was evangelical work deprived of this advantage at its inception? If ever there was a period when that work demanded every support, every help, surely it was in the church's infancy. Yet the idea of secession, or of competition among churches, which we are now assured is so beneficial, never suggested itself to the Apostles. It was their persuasion that union, not division, was the way to convert the world. Moreover, it is everywhere admitted—by Nonconformists no less than Churchmen—that division is now one of the chief hindrances to Christian work.[1] But if so, how can it have been so necessary to that work a century ago? Has that work entirely changed its character within the last hundred years? We might freely admit that the work of the Wesleys required to be preserved and extended at their death; that their "societies" supplied a want, and that the kingdom of CHRIST would have suffered if they had been suppressed; but what we fail to see, and what has not been proved, is the necessity for these or other societies "assuming the position of churches." Why must the lay preachers, as Wesley himself asked, "seek the priesthood also"? why must Wesleyans do what he forbade—call their society a church?[2] Nay, we may further ask, what has the work of GOD gained by the Wesleyan secession? It may be the Wesleyans have

CHAP. XV.

Phil. i. 27.

[1] See pages 12, 13.

[2] See page 96.

CHAP. XV. gained in numbers, in property, &c., but what has Christianity lost—lost in unity, solidarity, and power? For the example set in 1796 has borne its natural fruit—there have been some six secessions from this same Wesleyan body, and "churches" have sprung up by the score. The engineer has been hoist with his own petard. I suppose each of our 225 sects would similarly plead "the necessities of the work of GOD." But can it be that GOD's work *is* advanced by all this confusion, and discord, and dissension? Can it be better that the trumpet should give an uncertain sound; that CHRIST's church should speak with a Babel of voices? Can it be a recommendation to religion that men who will dine together and dwell together will not worship together? To us it seems that "GOD's work must be done in GOD's way," and we know that "GOD is not the author of confusion, but of peace."

1 Cor. xiv. 33.

2. To the plea that the writers of the New Testament, when they spoke, as they did again and again, of the church as "one body," did not foresee the corruptions of later days, we answer: First, that so far from this, they are constantly warning us against the deadly errors which would be developed. It may be that the Apostles did not foresee this or that particular error or event, but that they foresaw "perilous times," "grievous wolves," "false teachers," "damnable heresies," the denial of the LORD that bought us, and the like, is incontestable. Yet they never spoke of the duty or possibility of founding a new church, never breathed a syllable about secession. On the contrary, they repeatedly exhort men to unity; they warn them against a "schism in the body." They foresaw the seeds and beginnings of division, and can only find words to denounce it. Secondly, that there have been no greater corruptions in modern times than those which afflicted the first age of our religion. We have at any rate developed nothing worse in the Church of England than what St. Paul reprobated in the church at Corinth.[1] We have had no teachers proclaiming that the "resurrection is past

Rom. xii 4, 5; 1 Cor. x. 17, xii. 12, 13, 27; Eph. iii. 6, iv. 12, 16; Col. iii. 15.

2 Tim. iii. 1. Acts xx. 29. 2 Pet. ii. 1.

1 Cor. i. 10, xi. 18. xii. 25; Phil. i. 27, &c. Eph. iv. 3, 4; 1 Cor. iii. 3, xii. 12 *seq.* 2 Tim. ii. 18.

[1] See Note 1, p. 104.

already;" none affirming that "there is no resurrection of the dead;" none commending fornication as a religious *cultus;* none conniving at shameful incest. The Apostles had these gross corruptions *under their very eyes*, and yet they never counselled, never contemplated secession. Whatever the Papacy has done and taught, whatever abuses have existed in Anglicanism, at any rate, neither we nor they have ever sunk so low as this. And yet secession, which was unheard of then, must be practised wholesale now, must be *preferred* to union—and in the name of GOD's work! Lastly, our LORD, when He spoke of "My church"—not "churches," as the common parlance does—surely foresaw all the trials and corruptions in store for it—yes, foresaw the very "corruptions which occasioned the Protestant secessions and the events which occasioned English Nonconformity," and yet He did not vouchsafe one word to warrant the starting of any second church. And even if the Apostles did not foresee these particular abuses, still the SPIRIT of GOD, which, as Nonconformists believe, guided and inspired them, foresaw all the history, all the tribulations and divisions of Christendom. And foreseeing all these, that SPIRIT still impelled them to speak and to speak repeatedly of "*one* body;" and more, constrained them to base all their arguments, all their illustrations, on the *oneness* of the body, and then left them and us without even a hint as to any other body, without a syllable to suggest the possibility of any such thing. I submit, therefore, that the learned Professor's argument breaks down at every point. And not only so, but I venture to suggest that he is treading on dangerous ground; he is opening wide the floodgates to fanaticism and self-will. He knows, and no doubt deplores, the many wild and grotesque departures from the faith; he knows the crimes which have been committed in CHRIST's name, and yet suggests an argument that covers them all. They have only to say, both Jesuit and Salvationist, what in fact they both *do* say, "The necessities of the work of GOD require it;" have only to plead

CHAP. XV

1 Cor. xv. 12.

Rev. ii. 14, 20.

1 Cor. v.

See Note 2, p. 104.

CHAP. XV. that the "New Testament writers did not foresee the circumstances of to-day," to justify any extravagance, and his mouth is closed. We can only explain his having recourse to such an argument by seeing in it the straits to which the very ablest of Nonconformists are reduced in order to justify their position.

Note 1. The state of *personal* religion in the early church may be inferred from St. Paul's words in Phil. ii. 21. "For all"—he is speaking of his companions and fellow-labourers, see ch. iv. 21—"seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." Cf. 2 Tim. iv. 10, 16.

Note 2. And here I think we may fairly ask Mr. Beet and Wesleyans generally whether the necessities for separation are greater now than they were in Mr. Wesley's day? I am sure he will say they are less. He and they will admit that the Church has undergone a wonderful change for the better. But if so, why must they still dissent from her? They know very well that their founder protested against separation when the Church was almost a scandal to religion. Can it be necessary to remind them of his repeated deliverances on this point? "My brother and I," he wrote in 1756, "closed the Conference by a solemn declaration of our purpose never to separate from the Church." In 1760 he said, "Whoever separates from the Church will separate from the Methodists." In 1768 he wrote: "I dare not, like Mr. Venn, leave the Parish Church . . . to go to an Independent Meeting. I dare not advise others to go thither rather than to church. I advise all over whom I have any influence to keep steadily to church." In 1778 the Conference was resolved "that it is our duty not to leave the Church, wherein God has blessed us," &c. In 1785 he "openly declared" at Bristol that he "had now no more thought of leaving the Church than he had forty years ago." These again were his words in 1789, "I will not leave the Church of England, as by law established, while the breath of God is in my nostrils." And lastly, on December 11, 1789, fifteen months before his death, he wrote, "I declare once more that I live and die a member of the Church of England, and that none who regard my judgment or advice will ever separate from it." I do not cite these testimonies to prove that they bind the Methodists of to-day—though I do think that if they cling to Wesley's name they should be steadfast to his principles—but to show that even in those days, dark as the Church's condition and prospects were, "the necessities of the work of GOD" did not appear to require the formation of a new church. Then what, we may ask, has occurred since? The Church, on your own showing, has become better, not worse. And yet Mr. Beet asks us to believe that necessities which did not exist when the Church was at her worst, compelled secession a little later on, and forbid reunion now, though the Church is now doing her best to atone for her past neglect, and to discharge her mission to the world.

Works, vol. xiii. p. 305, Edition 1829.

Ibid., vol. iii. p. 260.

Ibid., vol. iii. p. 337.

Ibid., vol. iv. p. 131.

Ibid., vol. iv. p. 320.

Ibid., vol. xiii. p. 238.

Ibid., vol. xiii. p. 241.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND NOT A SECT.

"Be it known to all the world that our church is only reformed or repaired, not made new—there is not one stone of a new foundation laid by us; yea, the old walls stand still."—*Bishop Hall.*

At this point we are confronted by another objection which may not be passed over lightly, and it is this: "Your Church of England (they say), to which you invite us to return, is itself a sectarian body; it is only a few years older than the 'Independents;' it was created by an Act of Parliament; it is itself a split from the Church of Rome." These allegations must be considered, for if they are true—if we are ourselves mere separatists—we should rather, on the principles already laid down, be considering our own return to the "one body" and the "one fold" than be spending our time in entreating the various "bodies" of Nonconformists merely to exchange one form of sectarianism for another. But *are* they true? This is the question which now requires an answer.

1. The common taunt of the Romanists, that the Church of England, which comprehends, be it remembered, all the baptized people in England, is an Act of Parliament church, may be soon disposed of. For if such is the case, you will of course be able to refer us to the statute which originated it. If such an Act is in the statute book, nothing can be easier than to name the year and the reign when it was passed. It is needless to say that neither this nor anything at all like this can be done. The Act which founded this new communion

CHAP. XVI.

is nowhere to be discovered. Why, even the "protest" which was raised in the sixteenth century against the intolerable usurpations and corruptions of the Papacy was not the work of the State. "It was the act of the Church herself in her regular Convocations, and by the mouth of her then existing, unreformed bishops."[1] It was by the Convocation of the province of Canterbury —by the officers, that is to say, of the church of CHRIST in England—that, on the 11th of February 1531, the King was *unanimi consensu* recognised as the supreme head—"so far as the law of CHRIST allows"—of the church in England, and the pretensions of the Pope were repudiated. It was by the Convocation of York, with but one dissentient voice, that the same decisive step was taken. Not that either Convocation then *made* the king supreme in all causes, ecclesiastical as well as civil. All they did was to *recognise* his supremacy, and to repudiate that of the Pope.[2] But to resent the interference of a foreign prelate is not to found a new communion. The very last idea in the minds of our forefathers at that day was that they either would or could found a new body of CHRIST. The idea that an Act, or a hundred Acts of Parliament could set up a new Divine society would have seemed to them, trained as they had been and believing as they did, preposterous and blasphemous. By Acts of Parliament, such as the "Act of Supremacy" of 1534, they conceived that they might protect themselves from the exactions and domination of an alien and intrusive bishop, but these restrictive statutes involved no breach of the church's continuous life. Such Acts had been passed again and again, but no Romanist ever contends that either the "Constitu-

[1] Curteis, Dissent in its Relation to the Church of England, p. 188.

[2] The question propounded by Henry VIII. to the two Convocations was this: "Hath the Bishop of Rome any more authority in England by the laws of GOD than any other foreign bishop?" With the exception of Bishop Fisher, they answered unanimously, No.

tions of Clarendon" in 1164, or the "Statute of Mortmain" in 1279, or the "Statute of Provisors" in 1351, or the "Statute of Præmunire" in 1389 began a new Church of England. And that the Act of Supremacy did not is proved by these facts: first, that less than two per cent. of the clergy refused to accept the Revised Prayer Book (1559), which the Pope also offered to acknowledge and allow if the Queen would acknowledge his supremacy; and, second, that not until 1570—*i.e.*, not until the Pope excommunicated Queen Elizabeth—were there separate altars or separate assemblies for worship in England.[1] Up to that date, Acts of Parliament notwithstanding, all English Christians attended the same churches and partook of the same sacraments. No, this charge may perhaps be an effective controversial weapon, and may impose on the unwary, but all the same it is a painful sample of the sort of weapons which Christians too often stoop to wield for party purposes against their fellow-Christians. That our Roman brethren should have forged this brand is sad enough, but that our Nonconformist brethren should be so ready to take it up is sadder still. It is a pure invention. The wish was father to the thought.

2. But, admitting that no Act of Parliament establishing a new communion can anywhere be found, did not the Church of England at the time of the Reformation come out of and break away from the Church of Rome? What, did the baptized members of CHRIST in England —and Roman Catholics allow that every duly baptized person, even if baptized by a heretic, is a member of the church—did the baptized people of England, the clergy and laity who in the sixteenth century formed the visible society of Christians in England, "come out of" the baptized people of Rome or of Italy? For the title "Church of Rome," if Holy Scripture is to be our guide, can only designate the society of Christians in Rome, just as the church at Corinth or the church at Colosse

[1] The Romanists were not organised into a sect until 1581, by Fisher, Campion, and other Jesuits.

CHAP. XVI.

designated the society of Christians in Corinth or in Colosse. It is very significant that the churches mentioned in Holy Writ are always described by their "local habitation," by the city or country where they were planted. The idea of a "church of *Rome*," which should comprise Christians in *England*, &c., is entirely foreign to the mind of the Spirit as revealed to us in the New Testament—as foreign, indeed, as the idea of a *Baptist* or a *Wesleyan* "church." The Church of England *could* not come out of the Church of Rome, unless "Rome" represents the Catholic or universal church. No doubt Romanists claim that it does, but is this the belief of Nonconformists—and this argument is addressed to Nonconformists? Is it *their* creed that the Oriental churches, numbering some 80,000,000 Christians, and Protestants who number about 150,000,000 more, just because they do not recognise the Pope as universal bishop, and cannot accept his additions to "the faith once for all delivered to the saints," are not in the church at all? Do *they* contend that the Christians of Russia or the Christians of England, because (acting on the *jus Cyprium*) they bid the Bishop of Rome to mind his own diocese and leave their bishops to manage theirs, have *ipso facto* put themselves out of the Catholic society? Why, this is more than some of the Popes themselves have contended for. Gregory IX. allowed that the Eastern Church was a part of the universal church. In the creed of Pope Pius IV. the Roman Church claims to be the "mother and mistress of all churches"—a claim which distinctly admits the existence of other churches, unless the mother includes her own daughters, and the mistress her own handmaids.[1] No, the Church of England was never *in* the Church of Rome—she was a part of the church catholic—how then could she *come out of* it? If it is meant that she was in communion with the Church of Rome, and indeed under the domination of the Bishop of Rome, that is not denied. If it is meant that our

[1] Littledale, "Plain Reasons against Joining the Church of Rome," p. 134.

Christian forefathers, like most other Christians of Western Europe, were terrified by the "forged decretals" and spurious citations from the Fathers, on which the great fabric of Papal supremacy was gradually reared—terrified into almost abject submission to the Papal claims—that also is allowed. If it is meant that they were cowed by the same unblushing forgeries into sending Peter's pence, first-fruits, and what not to the Bishop of Rome, into submitting appeals, &c., to his decision, until at last King John consented even to hold his kingdom as the Pope's vassal, all this is freely admitted. The Church of CHRIST in England was for centuries under the heel of an Italian bishop; but not a century passed without a protest of some sort or other against his arrogant encroachments. Charter after charter declared that the Church of England should be free.[1] Statute after statute was directed against the Papal tyrannies. These things are matter of history—the charters, the statutes are still extant. But what do these things prove? They bear witness, it need hardly be said, not to constant *secessions* from any Roman Church, but to constant struggles on the part of the English Church against the ceaseless encroachments of the Roman pontiff. They aimed at breaking off the Papal yoke—not at breaking away from any community of Christians. And precisely similar in its design and purport was the legislation of the Reformation period. The "Defender of the Faith" had no quarrel, at least at first, with the *doctrines* of the powerful prelate to whom he owed his title.[2]

[1] The first clause in *Magna Charta* runs, "That the Church of England (*Ecclesia Anglicana*) shall be free, and have her rights entire and her liberties uninjured."

[2] "It has all along been his [Henry the VIII.'s] practice to adhere to the unity of the Catholic church, to maintain the ancient doctrine, and to conform to the worship and ecclesiastical government of the rest of Christendom. . . . It is true that he has rescued the English Church from the encroachments of the Church of Rome, but if this be singularity, he deserves commendation, for the King has only . . . helped the English Church to her ancient freedom." —*Letter of Bishop Tonstal to Cardinal Pole.*

CHAP. XVI.

It was simply a question who should be master in England, who should be supreme in all causes, ecclesiastical as well as temporal—the foreign priest or the native prince; and the latter carried the day, and he carried the church along with him. With his character and motives we have nothing whatever to do—they may have been ever so profligate. But this does not alter the fact that the clergy and the laity who made up the church in England, these were the men who, without one word about "separation," repudiated the Papal claims. It is true that these same Churchmen, or most of them, presently awoke to the gross perversions of doctrine which had crept in unawares into the church—and from the same source as the Pope's overweening pretensions, viz., from our corrupt human nature—and set about the *reform* of abuses; it is true they presently insisted on going back to the beliefs and customs of the first days; they appealed to antiquity, and when the Pope would not hear them, they appealed from him to the next general council; but they never *withdrew*, never *broke away* from any Christian communion. They went on ministering, preaching, worshipping, just as they had done before. Out of 9400 priests at that time in England, only some 189 abandoned their posts, even on the accession of Queen Elizabeth. It has lately been urged as a reproach against the clergy of that day that they found no difficulty in retaining their cures through all the changes of Henry VIII., of Edward VI., of Queen Mary, and of Elizabeth. But if so, what becomes of the charge of *secession* from the Roman Church? No, the truth is just the other way. It was the Romanists who broke away from the English Church—from the "one body" of CHRIST in this land. They were not very numerous—English Romanists are not numerous now—and it is not to be wondered at that they acted as they did, for they did not know, as we do now, on what a foundation of forgeries the Papacy rested. No wonder that they did not dare to break with the Pope; no wonder that they did not presume

See Note 2, p. 112.

to question the novel customs and beliefs which he and his had grafted on to Catholic faith and usage. And so in 1570 a handful of English Churchmen went out of the ancient historic church of the land, and in 1581 founded the Roman sect in England. They became Dissenters—they are Dissenters still—from the action of the church in England, which, having rejected the Papal supremacy, found itself free—*il n'y a que le premier pas qui coûte*—to reject Papal superstitions and innovations, to revert to the old paths and to reform itself on the primitive pattern. And this the church did—the baptized Christians of England under their bishops, priests, and deacons. They wrought a reformation in the church, but their last thought was separation from the church. They put their house in order, but it was the same house after as before. They pruned and weeded the vineyard of GOD, but it was the same vineyard still. They *could not* set up a new church had they wished it ever so; they neither wished nor attempted it.[1] The Church of GOD is not made up of doctrines, but of *men*. The "living stones" of which she is composed are living persons, just as the "chief corner-stone" is a Living Person. The doctrines, the beliefs, are continually being corrupted—witness the "down grade" movement at the present moment—but no changes of view or belief can destroy the continuity of a society; a change in its *personnel* can alone do that. It has been well said that "England is not a different country because she has abrogated the slave trade or had a Reform Bill," and that a "drunkard's personal identity is not lost because he reforms." A Nonconformist writer remarks on this: "What logic! he is certainly a very 'different' man, and England is a very 'different' country since 1832." The logic is un-

See Note, p. 112.

[1] "It is not [only] a religious, but a legal error to suppose that a new church was introduced into this realm at the time of the Reformation. It is no less the language of our law than our divinity that the old church was restored, not that a new one was substituted."—*Sir R. Phillimore.*

CHAP. XVI.

impeachable; it is the Nonconformist logic that is all in confusion. The *man* is the same: body, soul, parentage, property, &c.; the "difference" is only in *views and ways*. The *country* is the same, the same in its *essence;* the "difference" is only in its *accidents*, its statistics, its social and economical and political features. Precisely so, the *church* is the same; the difference is only in her regained freedom and reformed opinions.

Note. It is a common-place with Nonconformists that the church "rests on the Word of GOD." They forget (1) that the church is much older that the Word; (2) that in the Bible the truth is said to be built on the church, not the church on the truth (1 Tim. iii. 15); and (3) that they only have their Bible through the instrumentality of the church, which gradually eliminated the spurious from the canonical writings. Besides, the Bible always represents the church as founded not on doctrines, but on *men* (Eph. ii. 20; Rev. xxi. 14).

"There is no point at which it can be said, 'here the old church ends, here the new begins.' . . . It is an obvious historical fact that Parker was the successor of Augustine, just as clearly as Lanfranc and Becket."—Beard, *Hibbert Lectures* for 1883.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CHURCH JUSTIFIED OF HER NONCONFORMIST CHILDREN.

"The search for truth is not one half so pleasant
As sticking to the views we hold at present."

BEFORE I ask you, my Nonconformist brethren in CHRIST, men who, after all, name the same names in prayer that we do, rest in the same redemption and cherish the same blessed hope;[1] before I entreat you—those of you who will listen to me—calmly and dispassionately to consider, as in the sight of GOD, whether the objections you entertain to the doctrines and discipline of the Church of England are really such as to *compel* you to perpetuate "our unhappy divisions," permit me, in order to prepare the way, to ask your earnest attention to two important considerations. And the first is this :—

How many usages or institutions of the church there are to which the Nonconformists of a past age took the most strenuous objection, and on which they grounded their dissent from the National Church, but which you, the Nonconformists of the present day, regard as absolutely innocent, if not indeed edifying.

[1] "Notwithstanding the sad divisions of the church, all the saints, so far as they are sanctified, are one : one in their aims, one in their askings, one in amity and friendship, one in interest, one in their inheritance. . . . They are all of a mind concerning sin, that it is the worst thing in the world; concerning CHRIST, that He is all in all; concerning the favour of GOD, that it is better than life; concerning the word of GOD, that it is precious."—Philip Henry.

CHAP. XVII.

No intelligent Nonconformist will or can deny that there are rites and usages (and, I think I may add, beliefs) of the church which his Puritan forefathers—yes, and Dissenters of a later date—stoutly resisted and denounced, but which are never resisted or denounced now; which are now regarded as innocent, if indeed they are not adopted. Such are—

1. *The wearing of the surplice.* I mention this first, because, as Thomas Fuller reminds us,[1] it was on this question—not the *calling* of ministers, but their *clothes*—that Nonconformity had its beginning about A.D. 1550, and there was perhaps no single point of church order to which the Puritan objected more strenuously or more continuously. Cartwright denounced the "comely surplice" as "unmeet for a minister of the gospel to wear." Others arraigned it as "a vestment of Baal;" but the common charge against it was that it was "a rag of Popery." Its use led to actual rioting about 1564. It was complained of in the "Millenary Petition" (1603), and was a subject of dispute at the Hampton Court Conference in 1604. It cropped up again at the Savoy Conference, and was one of the reasons for the much vaunted "Exodus of 1662." But what Nonconformist raises his voice against it now? Who now makes it a test of a standing or a falling church? It is well known that at least one Nonconformist chapel in London has introduced a *surpliced choir*, but I have never heard that this flagrant innovation provoked a single protest. Many Nonconformist ministers read the Lesson in church at the Jubilee services of 1887, but not one, so far as we heard, declined to don this "vestment of Baal." The newspapers told us recently of some Nonconformists reading the Church's prayers in a church mission building, vested in this "rag of Popery." It is clear, therefore, that the surplice, once a *question brûlante*, is a stumbling-block to the conscience no longer. Your present-day Nonconformists do not agree in this

[1] *Church History*, Book vii. 30.

respect with your forefathers; no, you rather agree with the church.[1]

2. *The Ring in Marriage.* This, too, was a standing grievance with the Puritans. It was alleged in the Millenary Petition, and on other occasions. But does Dr. Dale, does Mr. Spurgeon, or Mr. Guinness Rogers find it an intolerable burden now? Do you consider it of sufficient importance to call for separation? Do you not rather marvel at the bigotry which could make a mountain out of such a ridiculous molehill? Nonconformity has here again gradually conformed.

3. *Kneeling at the Lord's Supper.* This was denounced at the Savoy Conference "as sinful and contrary to GOD'S Word." But what enlightened Nonconformist would think of calling it by these hard names now? Who would charge the Wesleyans, for example, with *sin* because they communicate kneeling? And yet for this, and such things as these, the later separatist Puritans[2] abjured the church of their baptism and founded new bodies.

4. *Ornate and beautiful churches.* Few things were more hateful to the earlier Nonconformists than our stately cathedrals and goodly parish churches. The man was thought to have done GOD service who, like Destructive Dowsing, "brake down the carved work thereof with axes and hammers." Even the scholarly Beza "could wish that those great temples had been demolished from the beginning." Painted windows, gems of art, were ruthlessly destroyed in the name of religion. The organ was battered down in Norwich Cathedral; there are some, I believe, who still see in it only a "kist o' whistles," and find in its 666 pipes the mark of the beast. "The LORD'S table consisted of bare boards resting on tressels in the middle of the nave; the communicants knelt, stood, or sate, as they liked; the chalice

[1] "Doth your lordship think that I care either for cap, surplice, or any such? But for the *law* so established I esteem them."—Archbishop Parker to Cecil (*Curteis*, p. 54).

[2] Separation began with the "Brownists."

CHAP. XVII.

was the first cup that came to hand; the clergyman wore surplice, the Genevan black gown, or his ordinary dress, as he pleased" (Froude, Hist. of England). The "steeple-houses," as churches were derisively called, and all their furniture, were *Anathema Maranatha*, and were only saved from demolition by the associations which clustered round them. But, *nous avons changé tout ça*, and modern Nonconformity is ashamed of this sour Puritanism. If "imitation is the sincerest flattery," you are for ever complimenting the church for the very things which your forefathers condemned. For example: the latest buildings of the Wesleyans or Congregationalists are hardly distinguishable from the once execrated "steeple-houses." Painted windows—and those not of carpet pattern either—now cast their radiance across the Presbyterian cathedrals of Glasgow and Edinburgh, across the "City Temple," and, in some cases, the country chapel. And as to cathedrals and parish churches, who has written more proudly or sympathetically concerning these than a late chairman of the Congregational Union.[1] Where, again, is the Cornish Methodist that sees any harm in Truro Cathedral? On the contrary, the architecture of the church has stimulated him to "restore" his chapel; only that (as if preaching was the first thing) he begins by abolishing the "pulpit" and replacing it by a gorgeous and spacious "rostrum," which looks like a lapse into paganism. As to organs and anthems, the chapel bids fair to outdo the church. Even to such minutiæ as harvest decorations again—fiercely denounced though they were but a few years ago—does the imitation extend. "The chapel will be elaborately decorated"—in such terms are harvest thanksgivings now advertised. We know what the stern Puritans would have said to this, and still more to the heterogeneous display of vegetable products hung round pulpit and pew, for we know that they classed *Christmas* decorations among "sacrifices to the devil and

[1] Rev. Edward White.

Sathanas." Yes, the structure, the furniture, the ornaments, the services of your sanctuaries bear witness to the decline of ancient prejudices; they show that in many externals at least you have already conformed.

5. *The use of liturgical forms.* Not that opposition to these is confined to the *earlier* Nonconformists. It still survives with unabated vigour, but only among the cruder types of Dissent. Among such, forms of prayer are still derided as "crutches," and the parson who prays out of a book is a "carnal man," and a liturgical service must necessarily be an unspiritual service. Not so the more cultured Nonconformists, many of whom yearn to be set free from the self-conscious, pretentious, and inflated, or else the familiar and didactic addresses [1] which too often pass for prayers. And so already forms of prayers are used in Presbyterian service at St. Giles, Edinburgh; the harmonised confession may be heard in the City Temple; a liturgy has been published "for the use of the Free Churches," and the resumption of liturgical service has been advocated in their annual assemblies. In America, a Presbyterian assures us that "the churches longest on the soil are adopting all the elements of liturgical worship." [2] Another instance—and a conspicuous one, too—of the approximation of Church and Chapel—of the gradual decay of the old Nonconformist ideas, and of a return to the ideas and usages of the Church!

See Note 1. p. 119.

And I might mention other institutions, such as the observance of Lent,[3] the weekly Communion, the rite of Confirmation, &c., to which Nonconformists have either already reverted, or to which they are feeling their way. I might also refer to the much more important matter of *doctrines*, for it is undeniable that in some respects the

[1] "One of the most eloquent prayers ever addressed to an educated congregation" is said to be the newspaper comment—all unconscious of irony—on one of the prayers offered at the City Temple.

[2] Professor Shields, *Century Magazine*, 1885.

[3] "Not long since an association of city ministers devised a 'non-episcopal observance of Lent!'"—Shields.

CHAP. XVII.

gospel preached by Nonconformists at the present day differs *toto cœlo* from that held and taught by their forefathers, and in some particulars approximates—at least more closely than it did—to the teaching of the church. It is difficult indeed to prove this in detail, and that because there are so few standards of Nonconformist belief to which we can appeal, and what there are vary so widely among themselves. Still, I question if any learned Nonconformist will deny that there has been a very general abandonment of old beliefs—Mr. Spurgeon says of all orthodoxy—and of those very beliefs which were among the grounds of all secessions from the Church. Take for example the "Five Points" of Calvinism; they may be preached at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, but in how many other chapels either of the Baptists or Congregationalists are they ever heard of? The "strong meat" once dealt out so freely—once regarded as almost the *peculium*, almost the *raison d'être* of certain bodies—is now to be found practically among the Particular Baptists alone. The doctrines are still in the trust deeds, but, *teste* Mr. Baldwin Brown,[1] *teste* Mr. Spurgeon,[2] they never see the light of day in the pulpit. "It is unquestionable," says Dr. Dale, "that during the last fifty years Calvinistic theology has been generally surrendered by the Baptist and Congregationalist churches of this land." And yet, so thoroughly was Congregationalism once identified with Calvinism, that the Independent chapel is still sometimes called, in common parlance, "the Calvinist meeting." Anyhow, it was Calvin's rigid and cruel system which was the *teterrima causa* of Puritan disaffection. It

See Note 2, p. 119.

[1] "At this moment, many of the most eminent of our ministers are preaching under trust deeds containing statements of doctrine which nothing could induce them to utter from their pulpits. . . . Were the original donors to rise from their graves, they would—unless indeed they have learned a larger theology, as we may be sure they have—be simply horrified to hear the doctrine which is systematically taught from their pulpits."—*The True Principles of Trust Deeds*, printed in the Congregational Year Book for 1872.

[2] *Sword and Trowel, passim.*

was this divided the English Church, and indeed Protestant Christendom, into two hostile camps—the system which we are now told is "generally surrendered"! After working endless mischief and estrangement, it has quietly disappeared from the "Evangelical creed." So the church *was* right then, after all, and your ancestors were wrong! But I must turn from this and similar changes of front to the obvious inference which these changes suggest. I respectfully submit to you that at least they constitute a valid reason for reviewing your present position—for listening patiently to any explanation of the difficulties which you still feel. A part of the old Nonconformist platform has already given way under your feet; may it not well be suspected that the rest is rickety and untenable? May it not be that objections *still* entertained—as, for example, to Apostolical succession, to Baptismal Regeneration, to Absolution, and the like, may turn out to be based on misunderstanding and to be propped up by prejudice? You will no doubt protest that this is impossible, but then your forefathers would have protested just as loudly that they could never be reconciled to the surplice, never abandon the "Five Points," never tolerate liturgical forms. To Churchmen patiently looking on and praying that Christians may be one, it seems that "Mr. Prejudice has fallen down and broken his leg," and they may not only wish with Bunyan "that it had been his head," but may see in his unsteadiness ground for hoping that that will come next.

Note 1. "My attention was more particularly drawn to the decidedly episcopal character of the service [at St. Cuthbert's, Edinburgh],—chants, hymns, lessons, anthems, and the whole presentation of the service—so different from the baldness, monotony, and gracelessness of the inherited services of the Presbyterian Church, universal some sixty or seventy years ago."—Professor Blackie, in *The Scotsman*, December 1889.

Note 2. "We have made a clean sweep of the theological controversies which in our forefathers' time shook earth and heaven . . . and chapels erected in every village . . . now to a chance spectator stand as the tombstones of dead controversies."—Principal Edwards (in *The Guardian*, January 15, 1890).

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHURCHMEN AN ARGUMENT FOR THE CHURCH.

"*Ce n'est pas l'erreur, qui s'oppose aux progrès de la vérité. Ce sont la mollesse, l'entêtement, l'esprit de routine, tout ce qui porte à l'inaction.*"—*Turgot.*

YET one more *preliminary* consideration remains to be advanced before I begin to deal *seriatim* with the strong objections which you, my Nonconformist brethren of the church, now entertain to the teaching of the church in England, and it is this:—

That the very doctrines and practices which appear to you to be unscriptural, and which you freely denounce as erroneous and dangerous, are nevertheless embraced, are held, or were held in their day, firmly and intelligently, after careful study and examination, by Christians, both laymen and clergymen, for whose piety and candour, whose scholarship and research, whose enlightenment and judgment on theological questions, *apart from these disputed points*, you have, and have expressed, the profoundest respect and admiration.

For if I can show, as I can, that this is the fact, then I shall be entitled to ask you to see in this fact a strong and an additional reason why you should carefully and patiently review your objections to the church; and more, a strong reason for suspecting that, after all, these same doctrines and practices may be perfectly lawful and right, and that you who denounce and oppose them must somehow be mistaken.

1. First, then, let me remind you that many of the doctrines of the church to which you are so decidedly opposed are, I will not say the *doctrines of the early*

Fathers and confessors of Christianity, for that would open up endless questions of dispute. You will tell me, I imagine, that our Christianity was very soon corrupted, that Christians at a very early date departed from the simplicity of the gospel, though why the second century should be *more* likely to do this than the nineteenth is not easy to discover, or why *you* should have kept the true faith when even *they*, near as they were to the time of our LORD, and living as they did under the chastening influence of persecution, lost it, it is impossible to say. To you, therefore, I will say nothing here about the doctrines of the primitive church, sure though I am that those doctrines were very different from yours, and reasonable as it seems to me to test our beliefs by the standards of the first days. But I *will* remind you that the teachings to which you take exception are advanced and upheld in the writings of those *great Continental Reformers* to whom you are constantly making your appeal—Luther, Melancthon, and even (in some particulars) Calvin himself. I begin at the Reformation, because you may share the popular belief that all the earlier Christian centuries were steeped in rank superstition. For the sake of brevity, I must confine myself to one or two specific points. Let us take, as a sample of this class, the doctrine which Nonconformists generally regard as perhaps *the* most dangerous and soul-destroying of all—the church's doctrine of regeneration in baptism. This is constantly cited (as will appear later on) by your theological writers as one strong reason (among others) why they are in conscience bound to dissent from the church; one reason why they *cannot* conform; one reason why Churchmen should come out of the corrupt and semi-Popish communion which retains this dogma. I say, then, and without fear of contradiction, that Martin Luther, Melancthon, and Calvin held this so-called Popish and pestilential doctrine,[1] and, what is

[1] Proof will be found in the following passages: Luther on Gal. iii. 27 (tom. v. p. 370); also on Joel ii. 28. *Catechismus Major*, tom. v. p. 657. *Homiliae de Baptismo*, vol. vii. p. 370. Melancthon,

CHAP. XVIII.

more, it is held by Lutherans still. I have confined myself to the one article of baptism, but the same Reformers also held firmly to other disputed points of the Church's faith. Calvin, for example, would fain have had an episcopate, and allows that Confirmation is covered by Heb. vi. 2, and the disciples of Luther and Melancthon retain it to this day. It was at the suggestion, again, of two foreign Reformers, Peter Martyr and Bucer, that the Absolution was introduced into our morning and evening prayer. If, therefore, the Church is altogether wrong on these points, she is wrong in what you at least would say is very good company. If you are right, then these Reformers, these pillars of Protestantism, were altogether in the dark, and were ignorant of the gospel.

2. I forbear to appeal to our *English Reformers*—to Cranmer, Latimer, Jewell, and the like—because they were English Churchmen, and because you would reply that they were only partially emancipated from the errors of Rome. But I must speak for a moment of some of those *great Anglican divines* whose writings are your standard works of divinity no less than ours, and in whom, I am glad to know, many Nonconformists share the Churchman's pride—I refer to such men as Pearson, Butler (who was brought up in Nonconformity and left it), Barrow, Beveridge, Chillingworth, Jeremy Taylor,[1] Ussher, Leighton, Tillotson, and the like. I remember that when a deputation of Nonconformist ministers gracefully welcomed a recent Church Congress to their town, they were eager to acknowledge their admiration for, and their deep obligations to, their writings—indeed, they claimed those writings as parts of

Opera, tom. i. p. 61.; tom. iv. p. 664. Calvin (though he is not always consistent), *Institut.* IV. xvi. 17; *Commentar.* (on Acts ii. 38); *Catechismus Ecclesiae Genevensis.* I cite the last as a specimen: "It is certain that both the pardon of sins and newness of life are offered to us in baptism, and are received by us."

[1] "The most eloquent of divines. Had I said 'of men,' Cicero would pardon me, and Demosthenes would nod assent."—Coleridge.

their own heritage. Well, is it not singular that, if the teachings of the Church are so unevangelical, so dangerous as some of you suppose, none of these writers had the penetration to discover it? Yes, and I may speak of the scholars and theologians of our own time, of Lightfoot and Westcott, and Vaughan and Alford. Their works are studied and valued by you no less than by ourselves; your ministers have drawn profit and inspiration from their learning no less than ours. And yet these men, and scores of others scarcely less eminent and no less honest, are committed, according to your writers, to a system which contains the elements of deadly error. Among the ornaments of the English Church—and her clergy are allowed to take the first place in Christendom for solid learning[1]—there have been not a few who have deliberately left your ranks for ours. Is it conceivable that *all* these were either so warped by prejudices or so controlled by worldly considerations, that none of them had the manliness, the honesty, to repudiate the corrupt and insidious teaching of the English Church? Does not their preference for it, their loyalty to it, afford a strong presumption that it cannot really be what you conceive it to be? Moreover, there is another class of writers, men whose theological views are generally supposed to accord with your own, the "*Evangelicals*"[2]—I speak of such men as the Wesleys, and Fletcher of Madeley, and Simeon—and there are men like Arnold, and Maurice, and Whately, and Kingsley, whose views were at least as broad and liberal as yours; and finally, there are statesmen and jurists and philanthropists—I am thinking of our Gladstones, and

[1] "*Clerus Anglicanus stupor mundi*" was said by a foreigner of our seventeenth-century divines.

[2] It is often brought as a reproach against the Evangelical school that they cannot honestly hold the teachings of the Prayer Book on such points as, *e.g.*, Baptismal Regeneration. Yet no one has written more sensibly and conclusively in favour of this view than their leader, Charles Simeon, and his words are quoted with approval by Whately, the *decus et tutamen* of Broad Churchmanship.

CHAP. XVIII.

Hatherleys, and Selbornes, and Wilberforces, and Shaftesburys, and General Gordons—all of whom have written on religious questions, and whose great powers and high conscientiousness you would be the first to recognise—does it not strike you as singular that these men, one and all of them, should cling so firmly and lovingly to a communion which you say is honeycombed with error? Am I not justified in affirming that these are men "for whose piety and candour, whose enlightenment and sound judgment, you entertain and have expressed the profoundest respect"? And if so, which is the more likely—that they should with one consent have embraced and defended the distinctive doctrines of the Church, steeped though they are in error, or that you should be the victims of misconception when you pronounce them erroneous?

3. But perhaps this argument seems to you to prove too much. Perhaps you seek to blunt its edge by affirming that it would cover Romish as well as Anglican errors. Perhaps you go a step farther, and point *me* to the great theologians of the Roman Church, or to the distinguished converts to that communion. But the two cases are not on all fours, and for this obvious reason—that the opinions of the great Churchmen just named were at least *their own*, whereas Roman writers can only echo the opinions of the Roman See. The former exercised the right of private judgment; the latter repudiate its exercise; they *have* no views save such as the Pope permits them. The converts to Rome must, it is true, have themselves exercised that very private judgment which they subsequently so energetically denounce; but their conversion has, I believe, invariably been the result, not of the patient examination of this or that doctrine (as, *e.g.*, transubstantiation, or indulgences, or the invocation of saints, or communion in one kind), but of submitting their judgment on all these points to the *ipse dixit* of the Pope. "*Roma locuta: causa finita est.*" They have accepted these teachings, much as some of them stick in their throats, because

they have persuaded themselves that Christendom *must* have an infallible head. They cannot have private opinions; hence the sterility of the Latin Church. The opinions of a Lightfoot or an Alford are of value just because these writers were free to follow the truth whithersoever it led them. If the English Church had an *Index;* if her children were content with the *fides carbonaria*—"I believe what the church (*i.e.* the Pope) believes; the church believes what I believe; I and the church believe one and the same thing"—then, and not till then, would the two cases be parallel.

4. And you may further retort upon me, that just as there are learned and illustrious Churchmen, so also there are, and have been, able, and scholarly, and judicious Nonconformists; and I should be the last to deny it. But the answer to this is, that, possibly through no fault of yours, they have not existed in anything like equal numbers, nor have they been men of equal powers and erudition. It has been admitted—if I remember right, by Mr. Baldwin Brown—that Dissent has not been distinguished for its education and culture, nor has it produced many scholars or expositors of the first rank; but then he reminds us that till recently the universities have been closed against it. Anyhow, I think it will be conceded that, whatever the cause, the Church can point to such a roll of names—I speak only of learning and acumen, not of piety—as Nonconformists cannot. I have often heard Wesleyans speak of their "great men," meaning thereby such men as Bunting, and Hannah, and Dixon, and Jobson, but these are names which are "writ in water," men who, however devout and estimable, were almost unknown outside of Methodism, and they have certainly contributed nothing to our thought or literature. Mr. Matthew Arnold has spoken of the leaders of Methodism as "fourth-rate minds," and I do not think that posterity will question his verdict. No, my argument *would be* invalid if you could instance a long string of Nonconformist writers, men of the first rank, men who

CHAP. XVIII.

were valued and studied by Churchmen; but that you cannot do.

5. In conclusion, permit me to print a few general testimonies which should weigh with you. The first is that of certain "Pilgrim Fathers:" "The humble request of His Majestie's loyal subjects, the governor and the company late gone for New England, to the rest of their brethren in and of the Church of England: We esteem it our honour to call the Church of England, from whence we rise, our deare mother, ever acknowledging that such hope and part as we have obtained in the common salvation, we have received in her bosom and suckt it from her breasts." The second is translated from the learned Genevan, Casaubon, A.D. 1612: "Unless I am deceived, the most perfect part of the whole Reformation is in England, where the study of antiquity flourishes along with the study of the truth." The third is from the great jurist and theologian of Holland, Hugo Grotius (circ. 1625): "It is clear to me that the English Liturgy, the custom of the laying on of hands on those arriving at years of discretion in memory of their baptism, the regimen of bishops, the presbyteries composed of clergy alone, with many other things of the same kind, *agree with the customs of the ancient church*, from which we cannot deny that in France and Belgium *we have departed*." Fourth, John Wesley wrote in 1780: "Having had an opportunity of seeing several of the churches abroad, and having deeply considered the several sorts of Dissenters at home, I am fully convinced that *our own Church*, with all her blemishes, *is nearer the Scriptural plan than any other in Europe;*" and in 1790, "I hold all the doctrines of the Church of England. I love her Liturgy, I approve her plan of discipline, and only wish it could be carried out." Fifth, I will cite the testimony of the eminent Wesleyan, Dr. Adam Clarke: "I consider the Church of England the purest national church in the world. Its doctrines and sacraments, which constitute the essence of a church, *I hold conscientiously*. I reverence the Liturgy

Ad Salmas. Epist. 837.

Ep. 62, p. 21, ed. 1687.

Works, xiii. p. 121.

next to the Bible." Next from Dr. Chalmers: "To the English Church the theological literature of our nation stands indebted for *its best acquisitions.* Nor can we grudge her the wealth of her endowments when we think how well, under her venerable auspices, the battles of orthodoxy have been fought." The last is from the Edinburgh Presbyterian,[1] Penny: "Its massive learning is the bulwark of Christianity. Its exquisite liturgies, second in divine composition only to the Scripture itself. . . . Well might the members of any other communion excuse the generous feeling which would awake those words of Holy Writ concerning her whom the best of her sons have rejoiced to call their mother, the Church of England:—'Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.'"

[1] The Synod of Dort (A.D. 1618), largely composed of foreign Presbyterians, affirmed "That they had great honour for the Church of England, and heartily wished they could establish themselves on this model."

Part II.

OF THE DOCTRINES OF THE CHURCH.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE GROUNDS OF NONCONFORMITY.

"The real way to make Churchmen of Dissenters is to convince them that on the points on which the two differ the Church is right and they are wrong."—*The Guardian.*

At last I am able to address myself to the proper subject-matter of this *Eirenicon;* at last I am in a position to ask devout Nonconformists, my brethren in Christ, many of whom are already sick-tired and heartily ashamed of the interminable divisions of Christians, and are yearning, and will yearn more year by year, for the re-union of Christendom; to ask them, in the interests of peace and religion, calmly and prayerfully to consider whether their objections to the ancient historic church of this land are really insuperable; whether, remembering that no visible church, either in England or elsewhere, can possibly be entirely pure, and none free from *all* admixture of error, the teaching and practice of the Church in England are such as to compel them, as a matter of conscience, to hold aloof from her communion, and to reject the ministrations of the "one body" into which some of them at least were baptized? Is it really the case that the teachings of this Church are so immoral, so unscriptural, and the discipline of this Church is so lax, so irreligious, as to make it a sacred and imperative duty that you should hold yourselves aloof from it, and that we Churchmen should forthwith come out of it?

And here let me frankly acknowledge that preceding

CHAP. XIX.

chapters, numerous as they have been, have been in some sense but preliminaries, intended to clear the course and pave the way to this question. It was necessary, in order to secure a hearing for any defence of Church teaching which aimed at re-union, to re-assert in the first place the Bible truth of the "one body;" necessary, to show that Scripture knows nothing of two, much less of two hundred, separate and estranged "churches" of CHRIST; and that however much the one church may have become corrupted, no man can by any possibility found a second, any more than men could found a new Jewish church or commonwealth. Otherwise, however successful I might be in vindicating the Church in England from the charges commonly alleged against her, my labour might be altogether lost. "Your church," I might be told, "is all very well; we have nothing to say against her; but all the same we prefer to stay where we are. The 'Wesleyan Church' or the 'Baptist Church' gives us all that we want." For if there are, as is commonly believed, any number of Christian churches, one just as true and lawful and Christian as another—churches which only differ in this respect, that one may be somewhat better ordered than another, or that this is perhaps more zealous and spiritual and successful than that, then it is (as the enemies of all religion say) a question of "tweedledum and tweedledee" after all, and it is almost a waste of words to plead for re-union.[1] If Christians are ever to be re-united in one flock under one Shepherd, they must first realise that there can no more be two flocks than there can be two Shepherds; they must realise that such a thing as a "Baptist Church," or a "Bible Christian Church," or an "Episcopal Church," is utterly foreign to the mind of CHRIST and the teaching of Scripture; they must be brought to see that whilst Christians can form any number of *societies*, such as the "Bible Society" and the

[1] "Though the doctrines on account of which chapels divided have ceased to be taught, the chapels do not unite."—*Pan-Presbyterian Synod.*

"Wesleyan Methodist Society," no society of human origin can, however pure its doctrines and however perfect its organisation, be matured or transformed in course of time by the piety of its members or the success of its missionary labours into a "church of the living GOD." It was therefore necessary for me, however long the preface might be; however numerous, *i.e.*, the objections to be considered, to prove the oneness of the visible church before embarking on any defence of her doctrines. I hope that this will be a sufficient apology—if apology is needed—for this long introduction to my proper subject.

Now, it cannot be too soon or too clearly understood by Churchmen that the *great* obstacle which bars the path of Nonconformists, which makes their return to the "one fold" in their present state of mind impossible, is the teaching of the Prayer Book! I could, if necessary, cite a large number of their publications to prove it—some, I must say, I should be sorry to advertise, because of their acrid and unchristian temper—but it may suffice to mention one, perhaps the most recent, the spirit of which is unimpeachable—I refer to the Rev. F. B. Meyer's "The Book of Common Prayer the ground of Religious Nonconformity." He tells us distinctly (p. 6) that "the main ground of the objection" of religious Nonconformists is not the use of the Liturgy, not the union of Church and State, not Episcopacy; their fundamental and all-sufficient reason is found *in* "*their religious and conscientious objection* to the Book of Common Prayer."[1]

[1] It is very unfortunate for Mr. Meyer's argument that, in the first place, his pamphlet was written under an entire misconception (as he himself allows) of the terms in which the *clergy* subscribe to the Book of Common Prayer—a mistake which goes far to neutralise all his conclusions; and, secondly, and still more unpardonably, that he quite overlooks—it cannot be that he suppresses—the fact that his argument only applies to Nonconformists who *propose to take orders* in the Church of England. His position is that religious Dissenters cannot conform because they cannot "say that they give their '*unfeigned assent and consent*' to all and everything contained in its pages" (pp. 9–11). The conclusive answer to

CHAP. XIX.

Now, then, we know where we stand and what we have to do. We have to show that the Prayer Book is right, that its teachings are reasonable and Scriptural, and that its critics are wrong. Or, if we cannot do this, then we have to show that its errors, or what they esteem to be its errors, are not of such a character as to justify secession; they are not so deadly as to warrant men in sacrificing that unity for which CHRIST prayed.

Objection may be taken, and is taken, to the Church in England on three grounds: first, in respect of her *doctrines*—her beliefs, her creeds, her presentation of the gospel, &c.; secondly, in respect of her *ritual*—her services, functions, and forms of devotion; and lastly, in respect of her *discipline*—her polity, constitution, orders, regimen, &c. These are the lines on which the attack is made; to these same lines constantly must the defence be adapted. But here a difficulty presents itself, and it is this—that it is sometimes difficult to decide under which of these heads an objection is to be classed. For so closely are all questions of doctrine, ritual, and discipline connected together, and so constantly do they overlap each other—ritual and discipline, for example, being for the most part only the outward expression of doctrines—that it is quite impossible in many cases to draw any sharp distinction between such questions, and to designate *this* as purely a question of doctrine and *that* as purely a question of ritual. Take, for example, the two questions of *Absolution* and *Confirmation*. The former might be put into any one of the three categories; the latter might be ranked with equal appropriateness under the first or the second—we may think, *i.e.*, of the *rite* of confirmation or the *doctrine* of the laying on of hands. It is probable, consequently, that the arrangement which I shall adopt may not com-

which is: (1) that of *no man* is any such assent and consent required; (2) the *clergy* solemnly declare their "assent" to the Prayer Book, and no more; (3) the Nonconformist who conforms has not to express "assent" to anything. If he can use and profit by our services, that is enough.

mend itself to some of my readers. But if that should be so, I would remind them that it is, after all, but a matter of *arrangement*, and that the order is of comparatively slight importance so long as the objections themselves are fairly stated and honestly met. But there is another difficulty which is not quite so easily disposed of, namely, that it is practically impossible to meet *all* the objections of *all* the sects. Some of them are so crude—for it will hardly be denied that some Nonconformists, like some Churchmen, are extremely ignorant, and their "difficulties" are the difficulties of ignorance—that it would only weary the intelligent reader if I were to attempt to meet them. And yet these same crude and irrational ideas do prejudice the minds of thousands against the Church and her ordinances. Other charges, again, made against the Church are mutually antagonistic, and the defence which aims at satisfying one sect cannot hope to meet the opposite view. For example, whilst most Nonconformists quarrel with the Church on account of her doctrine of holy baptism, the body which calls itself "the Catholic Apostolic Church" makes it a complaint that baptismal regeneration is not held and taught with sufficient distinctness amongst us. Under these circumstances, all that the Church apologist can do is to take the *stock* objections—those which are *commonly* entertained by fairly educated Dissenters—and deal with them as he thinks may be most generally useful; and, therefore, the course which I propose to take (following in the main the line of the XXXIX. Articles) is this: Under the head of DOCTRINES, I shall take the following subjects, and in the following order: First, her doctrine of the *Christian ministry;* secondly, her doctrine of the *Sacraments* generally; thirdly, her teaching as to the necessity and efficacy of *each* sacrament by itself; fourthly, her teaching about *Confirmation;* fifthly, about *Absolution*, &c. Under the head of RITUAL, I shall defend (1) her use of *Liturgical forms* in general; (2) the Order for morning and evening prayers; (3) the Athanasian Creed; (4) her service for the *Burial of the dead;* (5)

CHAP. XIX.

the Commination Service; and (6) her rites of *Consecration.* Whilst, under the head of DISCIPLINE, I shall hope to consider (1) her alleged *intolerance;* (2) her supposed exclusiveness and arrogance; (3) her alleged *Sacerdotalism;* (4) the charge that her clergy do not preach the Gospel; (5) the union of Church and State; (6) the levying of *tithes* from those who dissent from her teachings. Other minor questions will no doubt present themselves to certain minds, but those just enumerated constitute the main difficulties of Dissenters. And having felt these difficulties myself, and having gradually and happily, as it seems to me, found their solution, I may perhaps be permitted to say that I do not despair of convincing *friendly* readers—those who would be glad to think that the Church was not wrong after all; those who would rejoice to discover that a great historic community of Christians had not been "destroying more souls than it saved,"[1] but that its teachings had been misconceived by them and their fathers before them, and that what they had resisted and denounced was a caricature, a distortion of its doctrines—I do not despair of convincing *them* that the Church in England can give a good account of her venerable beliefs and usages, and has both reason and Scripture on her side. Of course, there are Nonconformists, as there are Churchmen, who are hopeless. There are some who are firmly resolved that, come what may, Dissenters must never give in to the Church; that nothing shall ever persuade them to abandon their attitude towards her. Such persons, of course, will not find her more evangelical than they had supposed. I have no hope that this or any EIRENICON will convince them against their will. But there are other, perhaps younger minds—for few men change their views after they are forty—who are open to argument, and who earnestly desire re-union, if it can be had without sin. I feel sure that I shall carry some such with me in the following apology for the Church.

[1] Rev. Dr. Binney.

CHAPTER XX.

THE MINISTRY—PART I.

"A solemn *admittance* to charge in the church is of such necessity, that without it there can be no church polity."—*Hooker.*

"Is the teaching of the Church of England on the subject of the *Christian Ministry* of such a character as to require conscientious Nonconformists to persevere in Nonconformity?"—this is the question to be discussed first. I have put this *first* in the list of Nonconformist difficulties, not because it is by any means the greatest, but because it seems to be the natural order to consider the *officers* of the Church, and the manner of their appointment, before we discuss the *doctrines* they have to preach, the *services* they have to conduct, or the *discipline* they have to dispense. And I shall endeavour to prove that the teaching and requirements of the English Church as to the Ministerial commission, so far from affording any justification of dissent, furnish a powerful and conclusive reason for abandoning Nonconformity.

But here, let me say at the outset, that in this and the other questions between Church and Chapel which are now to be considered, we have nothing to do with the opinions of individual Churchmen, or even of influential bodies of Churchmen. I ask Nonconformists to remember that the question for them is—not what a Haddan or a Liddon on the one hand, or a Farrar or a Hatch on the other, may have held and taught, but what the *Church herself*, in her *authorised formularies*, holds and teaches. Unlike some dissenting communions, she has her *lex scripta*, her standards, her articles of belief. It is to these, and to these alone, that the appeal must be

CHAP. XX made. The question before you is whether the teaching of the Church in her authoritative documents—documents which may be known and read of all men—is of such a character as to compel you to repudiate it.

Now, the language of the Church as to the ministry of the Church is found in Articles XXIII. and XXXVI. and in the Ordinal. But before we turn to these records, we find ourselves confronted with this obvious fact, that whatever their *ipsissima verba* may be, the laws and requirements of the Church are such as to exclude Nonconformist ministers from her pulpits, and are not such as to exclude an Oriental pope or a Roman Catholic priest. The former, on joining her communion, must be ordained, whilst each of the latter is regarded as an ordained minister of the church of Christ already. And of course this is a grievance to Dissenters—that the Church does *not* recognise the orders of a Congregationalist or Wesleyan minister, however gifted and eloquent and devout, not even of a Dale or a Spurgeon or a Punshon, and *does* recognise the orders of the most ignorant and bigoted and unspiritual Russian or Armenian pope—and many virulent words have been written about it. "Caste," "priestcraft," "sacerdotalism," these are some of the names constantly hurled at the Church's ordinance, and this law is often alleged as conclusive proof of the Church's bigotry and Popery. We shall see presently whether these charges can be sustained. I will merely for the moment ask Nonconformists to remember that "other people's doxy" always strikes us at first as "heterodoxy," if it differs from "our doxy," and that hard names are not arguments. They will admit, I know, that all Churchmen are not either knaves or fools, and it may be that a law which commended itself to a Hooker, a Butler, a Barrow, and a Sanderson may be found to be just and reasonable after all.

But before we ask on what grounds the Church has taken this seemingly arrogant and unreasonable course, it may be well to say, in passing, that the (so-called)

connection of Church and State has nothing whatever to do with it. It is often fancied, often said, that disestablishment would "do away with all this nonsense and exclusiveness." But disestablishment has not had this effect in Ireland. There is no Establishment, again, in the United States, but the law of the "Protestant Episcopal Church" there is identical with the law of the Church in England. Disestablishment would make no difference, because this is a question of *doctrine*, and that doctrine would remain the same after disestablishment as it was before. We cannot shelter ourselves, consequently, behind any action of the State. If the doctrine *is* arrogant or superstitious, then the Church alone must bear all the blame. CHAP. XX.

Now, it might possibly be a question whether, if Article XXIII. stood by itself, the Church of England could recognise Dr. Dale and Mr. Spurgeon as duly commissioned and fully accredited ministers of the one church in this land. But it is a question that need not be considered here, for Article XXIII.—which, it is matter of history, was somewhat vaguely worded out of regard to those foreign Reformers in conference with whom it was drafted—does *not* stand alone. Article XXXVI. refers us to the "Book of Consecration of Bishops and Ordering of Priests and Deacons" as containing a lawful and sufficient form of ordination. And that "book" settles the question—if indeed it was not settled before—for it decrees that *without episcopal ordination* "no man shall be accounted or taken to be a lawful bishop, priest, or deacon in the Church of England." Here then is a *final* reason why the Romish priest is, and the Nonconformist minister is not, accounted an officer of the Catholic church. The one has, and the other has not, "had episcopal ordination."

But though this settles the question, it must not be supposed, as it commonly is, that it is only the lack of episcopal orders that stands in the way. As just observed, this is the final, but by no means the only obstacle. If the Church to-morrow surrendered her

See Gore, *Christian Ministry*, p. 72.

CHAP. XX. belief in Episcopacy altogether, she would be just as far from recognising Nonconformist "orders" or appointments as she is now. For it is evidently the Church's law—a law which (she believes) is older than the New Testament, and is recognised in its Epistles—that (1) ministers must be "lawfully called and sent;" (2) must be sent, not by the congregation, but by other and special clergy;[1] and (3) must be sent with the outward and visible sign of "the laying on of hands." And it is primarily because Nonconformist ministers have *not* been thus "lawfully called and sent" (and not merely because they have not been ordained by a bishop) that their "mission" is not recognised, whilst that of Irish priest or Bulgarian pope is.

Such then is briefly the teaching of the church of this land as to the Christian ministry:—that there is a special order of ministers, the officers of GOD and of the congregation; that these ministers owe their office —not of course their qualifications, their *fitness* for office —to a formal act of appointment, and not to mere mental or spiritual gifts, and that the appointment must be made by the superior officers, the bishops, and with the prescribed form, the laying on of hands. And this teaching you resent as arrogant, as irrational, as Papistical. But I now humbly submit to you that, as reasonable and Christian men, you have no right—*absolutely not the faintest right*—to quarrel with it or to complain of it. I respectfully submit to Nonconformists that it is they who are to blame, and not the Church. And for this reason, that whilst the Church of England (as history shows) has *simply adhered to the universal law of the universal church from the earliest times*—at least since church history came out of the "tunnel" which it enters towards the end of the first century—you or your forefathers (as history also shows) have needlessly, if not wantonly, departed from the old paths, and

[1] The word *cooptati* in the Latin version of Article XXIII. is decisive on this point, even if the English version seems to be at all ambiguous.

have brought in new customs unknown to the churches of GOD and unwarranted by Holy Scripture. People often talk as if the Church of England had coined a new and arbitrary rule of ordination at the time of the Reformation, whereas the truth is that Dissenters have evolved a purely imaginary and idealised picture of the Christian ministry out of their own consciousness. All that the Reformers did was to *hand on the law which had been handed down to them*, and handed down without a break, so far as appears, from the times of the Apostles. I do not attempt to prove these statements now, but I will prove them in a subsequent chapter. Meanwhile, I repeat that the rule of the Church by which Dr. Dale or Dr. Parker is not recognised as a duly appointed minister of the congregation,[1] whilst an ignorant priest or superstitious pope is, affords no reason why you should withdraw from her communion—no reason whatever, simply because Dr. Dale and Dr. Parker, unconcious, no doubt, of what they were doing, have thought fit to disregard, to set aside the law which prevailed universally in the church for the first fifteen centuries of Christianity, whilst priest and pope have complied with it. If men *will* throw over the ancient and invariable rules of the Catholic church, rules which are distinctly recognised in Holy Writ; if they choose, for example, to say either that there is no such thing as separate orders of ministers in the church,[2] or that these ministers "have their commission direct from CHRIST Himself,"[3] and that the outward call and mission are of no importance,[4] or that "the laying on of hands," a rite used

[1] The word "congregation" in Article XXIII., just as in Article XIX., means "the Church"—the Latin has *ecclesia*—or "congregation of the LORD," not congregation in the modern sense of the word. See page 91.

[2] "In our innocence we had supposed that Nonconformists recognised no such things as orders." — *The Nonconformist*, January 26, 1888.

[3] *Ibid.*, March 6, 1884.

[4] "Any man who at his own instance and on his own authority gathers a congregation and dispenses the sacraments is guilty of schism. Even Barnabas and Paul were ordained by the Church." —Dr. Marcus Dods, 1 Corinthians, p. 104.

CHAP. XX. continually by the CHRIST of GOD, and appointed by Him to be used by others, "belongs to the 'infinitely little,'" that it is "a ceremony which, if not superstitious itself, is calculated to minister to superstition,"[1] or that ministers who have never been sent themselves can nevertheless send others—then they must not complain if their fellow-Christians decline to follow them in these airy speculations, and insist on keeping to "the faith once for all delivered to the saints."[2] No, the Nonconformist has no right to blame the Church for merely handing on a law handed down from CHRIST'S Apostles.[3]

[1] *The Nonconformist*, March 6, 1884.

[2] Shaking hands appears to have taken the place of "the laying on of hands" in some Nonconformist ordination services, as, *e.g.*, at that of Mr. R. F. Horton at Hampstead, and there are ministers who "have been appointed with no other ceremonial than that of a tea-meeting."

[3] And the candid Nonconformist will be the less inclined to do this if he will carefully mark the results of this long-standing disregard of church law. For who can contemplate with equanimity, and what Christian can view without distress, the present condition of the ministry, or what is commonly regarded as the ministry of the church? They have but to remember that any "pert, self-sufficient animal, that has neither sense nor grace," who "bawls out something about CHRIST or His blood or justification by faith"—I am quoting John Wesley—is forthwith accepted as a true gospel preacher, to see what mischief this denial of authority has bred. One of themselves has recently complained that "there is nothing to hinder a man calling himself a minister and preaching to those who will hear him, although his association, or presbytery, or bishop condemn him. It is easy," this writer adds, "for unctuous persons convicted of the grossest sin impudently to brazen it out." And then he goes on to tell us that "there are *huge impostures* in the centre of the religious world of London, which are going on, if we may not say with the connivance, we may say at least with the knowledge, of many Evangelical leaders. Were any attempt made to show them up, almost the whole forces of Evangelicalism would be turned on the daring offender."—*British Weekly*, February 24, 1890. What a terrible indictment, drawn by a Nonconformist hand, of our present system of amateur evangelism, or rather of the original wilfulness and contempt of law which has borne this baleful fruit! And even Dr. Parker has found it necessary to lift up his voice against irregular ministrations—and we are grateful to him for so doing. We are grateful, though it seems to us that the root of the mischief, the beginning of the present distress, was the irregular ministrations of his spiritual ancestors.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE MINISTRY—PART II.

"Let us not fear to be herein bold and peremptory, that if anything in the Church's government, surely the first institution of bishops was from heaven, even of GOD: the HOLY GHOST was the author of it."—*Hooker.*

I ENGAGE in this present chapter to prove that the Church of England, in requiring episcopal ordination on the part of those who would minister in her churches, so far from adopting any arbitrary and fanciful rule, so far from imposing any new and unreasonable condition, *has simply followed the universal law of the universal church* for the first fifteen hundred years of her existence, and that, consequently, *she* is not to blame if pious and learned Nonconformists are excluded from her pulpits, but those who have thought right—for what reasons it is unnecessary to inquire—to repudiate that universal law, a law which to Churchmen appears to be sanctioned by express warrants of Holy Writ, and who have introduced *new* customs of ordination, and new conceptions of the ministry—new in this country even *since* the Church's law was re-affirmed at the Reformation.

But before I enter on this proof, it may be well to point out within what narrow limits this particular grievance of Nonconformists, which we are now discussing, really lies. It is not that the Church has *reviewed their orders*—the orders of those who will allow that there is any such thing as "orders" at all—*and pronounced them invalid*, for at the time the Ordinal assumed its present

CHAP. XXI.

form—which was in A.D. 1552[1]—there was no such thing as a Nonconformist minister in the land, and there had been no such thing as a non-episcopal ordination. Nor is it that she has pronounced the orders of the *Lutheran* or *Calvinistic pastors of the Continent invalid*, for she has abstained from all reference to such pastors, and has expressed no opinion as to their position. It is that she affirms that *in the Church of England* no man shall be taken to be a lawful bishop, priest, or deacon, or suffered to execute any of the said functions, unless he has submitted, or shall submit, to the law of the Church of England (which law she has received, in common with other branches of the church universal, from the earliest ages)—to the law, that is to say, of episcopal ordination.

And this is all, absolutely all, that the Nonconformist on joining the Church is required to acquiesce in, viz., that men cannot be allowed to act as officers of the National Church unless they will submit to the Church's own rule of appointment. Such Nonconformist is free to believe, if he will, that the ministers he has hitherto recognised are true and lawful ministers of CHRIST. It is no secret that there are some clergy who recognise all earnest Nonconformist preachers, and say they find nothing in the Prayer Book to forbid it. But he is not free to believe that a man is a bishop, priest, or deacon in the Church of England who has not been appointed bishop, priest, or deacon in the way that Church prescribes.

And is this so great a hardship, or is it so very unreasonable? Is a man recognised as a Wesleyan or Congregationalist minister simply because he is earnest and eloquent and successful? Is there *any* religious body that recognises men as ministers of its communion if they have never been *made such* in the way which the rules of that communion prescribe? Is it possible for any community, religious or secular, to recognise as its

[1] A few unimportant changes were made in 1662.

officers men who, however *fit* for appointment, have never been appointed. Even the Friends, who hold that the inward call is the only qualification for their ministry, nevertheless acknowledge no "Public Friends" or preachers, who run without formal sanction. No, the Church only does what all other bodies or societies do, and find it absolutely necessary to do,—she requires men who wish to serve at her altars to be appointed in her way, and no other.

But it will be said—and this no doubt is the real grievance—that whilst a Wesleyan is free to invite a Baptist to occupy his pulpit, and a Baptist to invite a Bible Christian, and so forth, the clergyman is precluded, by the rules of his Church, from asking any of these to preach in his place. But what is this but to say that the beliefs and rules of the Church in this particular are different from the ideas and rules of the Wesleyans or Baptists, or rather, that the bodies which have left the "one body" have also disregarded its ancient laws and usages? These bodies, attaching little or no importance to the mode of appointment or to the rite of ordination in any shape, can, of course, with a clear conscience, accept any ministrations which are thought to be acceptable and edifying.[1] With the Church it is otherwise. Adhering to the ancient law of Christendom, believing that law to be Scriptural, not daring to depart from the pattern sanctioned, as she believes, by the Apostles, she is compelled to insist on the observance of that law—and small blame to her for so doing. It is easy to call this bigotry and priestcraft, but why may not Churchmen have a conscience and a belief as well as other Christians? and why may not the Church have her rules—rules which she regards as necessary and salutary—as well as other bodies? Or, rather, why is she not free to keep to the *old* rules, whilst they are free to devise any sort of new ones? The only grievance,

[1] "The Rev. Mary L. Moreland has recently been ordained as a minister of a Congregational church in Illinois."—*British Weekly*, September 27, 1888.

CHAP. XXI.

therefore, of Nonconformists is, that they cannot be permitted to act as ministers of the *Church which they have renounced*, on *their own terms*, *i.e.*, so long as they persist in disregarding the Church's law, which was also for the first fifteen centuries the law of the church universal.

But this is what I have now to prove—that episcopal ordination *was* for fifteen hundred years the invariable law of the universal church. The proof is very simple: it is a question of fact, of pure history. For if this was *not* the universal law, then let the exceptions be produced. If the churches of the first days, or of the Middle Ages, or of the fourteenth century, or any one of them, recognised men as "lawfully called and sent" who had either never been *sent* at all (that is to say, who had called and sent themselves), or who claimed to have "received their commission direct from CHRIST," and so to be independent of all appointment by any human authority, or who derived their authority from their congregations, or from "recognition" by other Christians, or who had no proofs of their "mission" whatever to offer except their own piety and success, or who had been sent without the laying on of hands, or who, finally, had been sent by others than the highest order in the church, then *let such churches be named.* If instances can be alleged, the Church may perchance relax her rule. But no such church can be named. It is impossible to mention even *one* — and if one could be mentioned, the exception would only prove the rule. Three centuries ago, the judicious Hooker asked for one single example and no more. Not one was alleged then, and not one has been discovered since. "We require you," he said, "to find out *but one church on the face of the whole earth* that hath been ordered by your discipline, or hath not been ordered by ours, that is to say, by *episcopal regimen*, sithence the time that the blessed Apostles were here conversant." No, in no part of Christendom and in no age did the Church depart from this law. This is not an *opinion;* it is an

undeniable *fact*. "Early in the second century," writes one who is allowed to have no prejudices in favour of Episcopacy,[1] "the episcopal office was widely and firmly established." Perhaps the testimony of the unbelieving Gibbon will be accepted as impartial. "*Nulla ecclesia sine episcopo*" (no church without a bishop), he writes, "has been a *fact* as well as a maxim since the time of Tertullian and Irenæus."[2] Or, if that is insufficient, let the testimony of the great Dutch Presbyterian Grotius be added thereto: "Episcopacy has been received by the universal church; it had its beginning in the times of the Apostles, and it is approved by Divine warrants." And now, forsooth, it is a crime or a grievance for the Church of this land to walk in the old paths, and Churchmen are bigoted and prelatical because they will not recognise, in defiance of all Scripture and of all the lessons of antiquity, as a minister of the Church *anybody and everybody*—for this is what it ultimately comes to—*who claims to be* a minister of CHRIST, and we are arrogant and supercilious, all because we cannot at a moment's notice take every minister at his own valuation, and accept as officers of the Christian commonwealth those who, by their own showing, have taken this honour to themselves.

I shall hope in a subsequent chapter to examine the *Scriptural* argument for and against Episcopacy—for of course it will be said that though this institution is undeniably *very* ancient and was *very* widespread, it does not go back far enough; it does not find any place in the New Testament. We must inquire, consequently, what warrants for this rule can be found in the written Word. At present, I must confine myself to one question: If Episcopacy is not of apostolical origin, if it is an innovation since the very earliest ages, then will our Nonconforming brethren kindly tell us *when* it began,

[1] Bishop Lightfoot.

[2] He might have said Ignatius, A.D. 110. The Ignatian Epistles, allowed to be genuine, contain undeniable testimonies to Episcopacy.

CHAP. XXI.

when this new departure was first introduced into the church? For so marked an innovation as this, one which so closely affected the clergy and their powers and *status*, could not be introduced quietly. This thing, if it was done, could not be done in a corner. It would assuredly provoke so much remark, so much protest and opposition, that we shall find traces of it, and sharp and clear traces too, in the pages of church history. When, then, did a Presbyterian or Congregationalist system give place to Episcopacy?[1] When was this fundamental change effected? Who first claimed the place of a bishop;[2] who first dared to say that he and such as he had the exclusive right of ordination? In what church, in what country, was this right first conceded? There is not a line, not a syllable, to show that any such change was ever effected at all. No protest, controversy, or schism is on record, to mark the rise of episcopal pretensions. There is only one inference possible from this, and it is that episcopal ordination was a law of the Church from the beginning.

[1] Dr. Witherow, in his *Form of the Christian Temple*, objects: "To ask us to name the time and place when the primitive bishop vanished and the prelate appeared in his room is about as reasonable as to ask us to name the hour of the day when the child becomes a man, or on what day of the year the man becomes old." Are we then to understand that the prelate is the natural and inevitable and divinely-ordained development of the presbyter, as the man is of the child, and as age is of manhood? This objection overlooks the cardinal point—that the prelate is said to belong to a *different order* from the presbyter. It is not unreasonable to ask for the day and hour when a man became a graduate or a deacon became a priest.

[2] It has been pointed out by Isaac Barrow that to be a bishop in early days was to *court persecution*. Yet everywhere, in churches the most distant and disjoined, we find bishops.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE MINISTRY—PART III.

"Is it asked whether Episcopacy exists by Divine ordering? It is enough to reply that CHRIST framed the pattern of it in the college of the Apostles; that the Apostles followed that example, and that the consent of the universal church is indisputable." —*Grotius.*

IN the two preceding chapters on the Christian ministry it has been conclusively shown that the Church of England, in insisting on episcopal ordination, so far from devising any new and stringent rule, has simply retained and re-affirmed the law of the church universal, observed in every age and in every country, without a single exception, throughout the first fifteen centuries of her existence. If this is not so, no doubt the pious and candid Nonconformists to whom this *Eirenicon* is addressed, or their shrewd and learned ministers, will be able to mention the time and the place where the contrary custom prevailed. A candid and amiable Nonconformist writes me that "Dissenters will not grant my premises, and therefore cannot accept my conclusions." Then will he or they produce these cases of non-episcopal ordination in the first 1500 years of Christianity? We ask for one approved instance and no more. And until this one instance is forthcoming, is it too much to beg of our brothers in Christ that they should drop the reckless accusations of arrogance and presumption so often levelled against this law? Does the Church of this land really deserve hard and bitter names simply because she has adhered to a rule which until the time of the Reformation was never questioned, save by the heretic

CHAP. XXII.

Aerius, or never violated? Especially when this same rule, as I shall now undertake to show, is distinctly recognised in the written Word of God.

But before I embark on this inquiry—"What saith the Scripture" as to the orders and ordination of Christian ministers?—three preliminary considerations require a brief mention.

First, is it likely, is it conceivable, that, century after century, *all* bodies of Christians, in widely different countries, and separated as they were on many and vital questions, with sects and heresies not unlike those of later days, should nevertheless with one accord, with absolute unanimity, have agreed on the question of episcopacy, if the roots of that regimen had not seemed to them at least, whatever they may seem to us, to be laid deep in Holy Scripture—that same Scripture to which they were constantly making their appeal? Could this unvarying rule have established itself in the church, have *so firmly* established itself that not the wildest of the sects ever presumed to dispute it, if all the time there was no warrant for it in Holy Writ? I submit that this fact by itself affords a strong presumption that if men do not find Episcopacy in Scripture it is not because it is not there, but because their reading of Scripture is biassed and wrong.

Secondly, it is to be remembered that the rite of ordination is older than the New Testament. Both the appointment of ministers and the mode of their appointment date from a time anterior by some years to the earliest of the Epistles. The Epistles to the Thessalonians cannot have been penned before A.D. 54, and the first of these recognises ministers as already existent, whilst one appointment—that of the Seven—with prayer and the laying on of hands, had taken place *twenty years before*—in A.D. 33. The first *recorded* appointment of presbyters—many appointments may have been made of which no record is preserved: some *must* have been, see Acts xi. 30—takes us back to the year A.D. 46. We must not expect, consequently, to find in the New Tes-

Ch. v. 12.

Acts vi. 6.

Acts xiv. 23.

tament any ritual of ordination prescribed, or any precise account of the different orders of the ministry, for the simple reason that such orders were already established in the churches, and such ordinations had already taken place amongst them. All we can look for there in the nature of things is—casual references to established usages, a mention in passing of the different officers of the Christian communities, instructions as to their qualifications, &c. We may justly look for such notices as these, but we cannot expect St. Paul or St. Peter to go into details as to institutions which for years past had been perfectly familiar to the churches to whom their letters were addressed.

Thirdly, if the statements of Holy Scripture as to the orders and appointment of the ministers of the church are not so full or so numerous as some might expect, this very absence of express directions is in itself a clear proof that the subject of ordination was so thoroughly well understood and agreed on that no written instructions on the part of the Apostles were required. We may be perfectly sure that St. Paul, for example, who gave such careful and minute instruction on the subject of almsgiving and on the scandals and disorders in the Corinthian church, would not have failed to write at length on a matter of such vital importance — so necessary to the very existence of the church—as the constitution of its officers, but for the fact that on this subject there was no divergence of opinion or practice. The very silence of Scripture is a proof that herein all Christians were at one.[1]

2 Cor. viii., ix. 1 Cor. v., vi.

[1] I am glad to be able to cite in support of these views an authority which will weigh, and justly so, with Nonconformists, that of Dr. R. W. Dale. In the preface to his book on the Atonement, he reminds us that the Epistles "were for the most part *occasional* writings," "suggested by accidental circumstances," and then proceeds to say: "The frequency and distinctness with which a doctrine is asserted in the apostolic writings is therefore no test of its importance. It might even be contended, with considerable plausibility, that the importance of a doctrine is likely to be in the inverse ratio of the number of passages in which it is directly

CHAP. XXII.

We see, then, that the orders of the Christian ministry, whatever they were, and the mode of ordination, whatever it was, being older than the earliest portions of the New Testament, all that we can hope to find in that book on these subjects is—precisely what we do find—a casual recognition of them, and occasional references to them as to institutions already established amongst the first Christians. I dwell on this point—that the ministry existed before the Scripture—because it is often argued that if these orders were of any importance, precise and detailed directions would have been given concerning them; whereas the truth lies just the other way, namely, that under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, sufficient directions had been given already, either by word of mouth or by the practice of the Apostles. That these directions were sufficient is proved conclusively by the fact that they ensured unanimity and uniformity on these questions in all the churches for the first fifteen centuries of Christianity. We find, consequently, that detailed instructions as to the ministry are not found in the Epistles precisely because they were not required; because all arrangements were made and accepted before a line of the New Testament was penned. Let us now inquire, however, what scattered references to the then existing ministry are found in the Acts and Epistles, and what they teach.

I pass over the entire Old Testament, with its *three orders* of ministers, high priests, priests, and Levites, though this hierarchy has been supposed—and not without reason, seeing that GOD cannot change His plans—from the earliest times[1] to foreshadow the three orders of the Christian ministry. I pass over the fact that in the beginning of our religion, during the lifetime of our

taught, for the central and most characteristic truths of the Christian faith are precisely those which the churches were the least likely to abandon. These truths were safe, and the Epistles deal generally with the truths which were in danger." Pp. 20-23.

[1] Clemens Romanus, for example, calls the bishop *summus sacerdos*, the presbyters *sacerdotes*, the deacons *Levitae*.

LORD, there were three orders of Divine ambassadors to men, the Master, "the Twelve," and "the Seventy." I come to the Acts of the Apostles, the only history we have—and that is necessarily imperfect—of the early church. In chapter vi. we read of the appointment of "the Seven" commonly called "deacons." Here, then, we have an order—the lowest—whose primary function was to "serve tables," though we presently find them preaching the Word. They were chosen, it is true, by the congregation, not because (as is sometimes supposed) the congregation had an inherent right to choose, but for a special reason—because of the murmurings and dissatisfaction which had prevailed;[1] but they were appointed by the Apostles, and appointed with the formal act of the "laying on of hands." In the Pastoral Epistles we find that these officers, or such as these, are a recognised and permanent institution of the Church, and the "laying on of hands" is mentioned, though quite casually, as a familiar and understood thing, as the authorised mode of appointment. In Acts xi. 30 we read of a new and second order, the "elders" or "presbyters," in the mother church of Jerusalem. Not a word is said about the time or mode of their appointment; they appear as regular and familiar officers of the church—so familiar, indeed, that the historian does not think it necessary to give any account of them, or their institution, or their duties. In Acts xiv. 23 we are told of the appointment by the Apostles Barnabas and Paul of similar "elders in every church." That the Apostles *commissioned* or appointed these elders, even if the churches chose them (which is by no means likely) is beyond all question. The language of the historian is clear and decisive. Mention is made of "prayer and fasting," but not of the laying on of hands. But it is inconceivable that a rite which we know was in constant use at ordinations—even when the lower order of "deacons" was appointed—can have

St. Luke x. 1, 17.

Acts vi. 10, viii. 5.

See Note, p. 155.

Acts vi. 6.

1 Tim. iii. 8, 10, 12, 13.

1 Tim. v. 22.

Acts xiv. 14.

Acts xiii. 3; 1 Tim. iv. 14, v. 22; 2 Tim. i. 6.

[1] See page 62.

CHAP. XXII.

been omitted here. We cannot possibly expect the historian to give us full and detailed particulars over and over again. In the 15th chapter mention is made again of the "elders" at Jerusalem, who are carefully distinguished from the "apostles" on the one hand, and the "brethren" on the other. So in ch. xvi. 4. The "elders of the church" at Ephesus are referred to in chap. xx. 17, and *these* "elders" or "presbyters," it is important to observe, are also called "overseers" or "bishops." The same order is mentioned in 1 Tim. iii., v. 1. 17, 19; Tit. i. 5; James v. 14; 1 Pet. v. 1, &c.; and here also these officers are sometimes called "bishops." This, then, is the *second* order—those who were called in that age indifferently "presbyters" (of which word "priest" is a shortened form), which means elders—because of their age and dignity—and "overseers," which is the meaning of the word "bishops," because their duty was to take the oversight of the churches. But all this time there was a third order in the church—the first in point of time and authority—the apostles, an order which comprised not only the twelve, but also certain chosen vessels designated to the apostolate by GOD Himself, ordering and governing the church.[1] So that in the early church, as in the Jewish, we find three orders of ministers—apostles, presbyters, deacons, and the first has the exclusive power of ordination. But a few years later—and this is the hinge of the question—in the Pastoral Epistles we find ourselves in the presence of a superior officer, not an apostle, yet exercising powers such as the apostles themselves exercised, and such as presbyters alone did not exercise—the powers of ordination and of government. We find Timothy placed by St. Paul at Ephesus with authority both to choose and to ordain both deacons and presbyters, and careful instructions are given him as to the sort of persons he is to appoint to these offices. It is also quite clear that he has a general authority over the

Acts vi. 6. Acts xv. 6, 23.

Acts xx. 28.

1 Pet. v. 2.

Acts i. 26. Acts xiii. 2, xiv. 14; Rom. i. 1, &c.

[1] At first, "the episcopate slept in the Apostolate."

church and its teachers. Now we know from Acts xx. that there were elders and overseers already at Ephesus, but here we find *one man placed over all the rest;* one man who is to do what the rest are not to do—to govern and ordain. We find Titus exercising similar apostolic powers in Crete. He had been placed there by St. Paul, the apostle of the uncircumcision, in a position of unmistakable authority, to finish what Paul had left undone, and to "ordain elders in every city." But it is not among the Gentile churches only that we find traces of these superior officers. It is pretty clear that St. James occupied a similar position in the mother church at Jerusalem. Here, then, we have three men, not apostles, exercising powers either delegated to them by Apostles, or, in the case of St. James, with the full approval of the Apostles. These three officers, call them what you will, are mentioned casually in the course of the history or in St. Paul's letters. There may well, therefore, have been others, occupying a similar position, to whom no such reference is made. From early times it has been held that such officers may be traced in the "angels" of the Seven Churches of Asia. But whether these "angels" were "bishops" or no, and whether overseers like Timothy and Titus were many or few whilst the Apostles lived, it is an undoubted fact, admitted by Presbyterians themselves, that in the next century such superior officers, discharging functions like those of Titus and Timothy, overseers alike of the churches and of the clergy, are found *everywhere, in every church.* There is no exception to the rule.[1] Such a chief pastor as St. Paul had placed at Ephesus and in Crete is now, in the second century, found in every large community of Christians. And to such officers (being "overseers" in a *special and peculiar sense, i.e.*, of the

1 Tim. i. 3, 18, ii. 8, 11, iv. 6, v. 14, 19; 2 Tim. iv. 2, &c. Titus ii. 15. Titus i. 5.

Acts xv., xxi. 18; Gal. i. 19, ii. 12. 1 Tim. i. 3; Tit. i. 5.

Rev. i.-iii.

[1] "Before the second century had closed, the practical question, *if ever there was one,* had settled itself. God's providence had ordained that the universal form of government should be the Episcopal form."—Plummer *Pastoral Epistles, in the Expositor's Bible,* p. 107. See also Note 2, p. 155.

CHAP. XXII.

shepherds as well as of the flocks) the name "bishop" (*i.e.*, "overseer") is now given exclusively. And such officers, both bearing this name and discharging these functions, have been found in all parts of Christendom ever since. Thus, step by step, do we trace the order of bishops in the Bible.

But it will of course be immediately objected that "all presbyters (as we have admitted above) are called 'bishops' in the New Testament." Undoubtedly; but what of that? The question is: Did all presbyters *exercise the functions and authority of a bishop*, such a bishop as St. James or Timothy was? The *name* is of no consequence. "Literature is full of words whose meaning has been widened or narrowed by the lapse of time." The title of emperor (*imperator*) was once given to all *generals;* the name of "duke" (*dux*) to all *leaders;* the name of *deacon* (*diakonos*) to all *servants*, and in the Eastern Church all priests are still called "popes" (*papa*). Nothing could be more natural than that the name "episcopus," once given to all overseers, should afterwards be restricted to the *chief* overseers of the churches.

And it will also be said: "Presbyters have the right of ordination. In 1 Tim. iv. 14 St. Paul speaks expressly of the 'laying on of the hands of the presbytery.'" True, but in 2 Tim. i. 6 (referring to the same person) he mentions "the laying on of my hands." That St. Paul *associated* the elders with him in this ordination is admitted, but it does not follow from this that they could or did ordain separately. Priests now *assist* in the ordination of priests in many churches which deny their right to ordain alone. If the participation of presbyters in the ordination of Timothy disproves the episcopacy of the apostolic age, then the same practice should now prove that "bishops" are unknown in the Church of England, or that presbyters can *per se* ordain in that church.

But no doubt we shall still be told by some, "You are all wrong. You are entirely mistaken. The early church

had no bishops: the New Testament recognises none." Our answer is: If we are mistaken, it is at least in good company. If we do misconceive the mind of the Spirit, all the members of CHRIST'S church for 1500 years, including men who sat at the feet of the Apostles, did the same. If Episcopacy is a gigantic blunder, then it began in the best and purest age of the church.[1] Yes, the rejection of Episcopal regimen means this—that the Christians who followed the Apostles, one and all, utterly misunderstood them, and that it was reserved for the sixteenth century to discover the HOLY SPIRIT'S plans and arrangements for the government of the church. Can you believe it? I cannot.

[1] See page 145.

Note. "The theory which makes the pastorate emanate from the church as its representative is not scriptural. The commission is rather an emanation from the Apostolate, and therefore mediately an institution of JESUS Himself."—Godet on St. Luke xii. 41–43.

"The men who from time to time were to hold the various offices involved in the ministry . . . might indeed fitly be elected by those to whom they were to minister. In this way the ministry would express the representative principle. But their authority to minister, in whatever capacity, their qualifying consecration was to come from above."—Gore, p. 71.

Note 2. "Very early indeed in Christian history, while some living men could still remember a living apostle and many men could remember an apostle's friends, an episcopacy was the governmental rule over Christendom. . . . Irenæus is assuredly sufficient testimony for the practical universality of a constitutional episcopacy at his early date and so long before him that the rivalry of other politics seems to have been unknown to infant Christian history."—Rev. H. C. G. Moule, at Church Congress, 1890.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MINISTRY—PART IV. (*Conclusion.*)

"If the HOLY SPIRIT was given to the Apostles, as our LORD promised, to guide His servants into all truth, then surely into practical truth when organising the church, as well as into speculative truth when preaching the gospel."—*Liddon.*

I PROPOSE in this chapter to give a brief summary of the conclusions to which our somewhat protracted review of (1) the uniform order of the Christian church throughout the first fifteen centuries of her existence, and (2) the incidental references to the ministry contained in Holy Writ have conducted us. But before I do this, it may be well that I should once more point out what, and what alone, I am concerned, for the purposes of this *Eirenicon*, to establish. For I am *not* required to prove, and so far I have not essayed to prove, that the ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons, in due and orderly succession, is the only lawful and Scriptural ministry; nor am I under any obligation to show that Nonconformist ministers have not been lawfully called and sent. All that I have to demonstrate is—and this I hope has been done—that the rule of the English Church (in requiring episcopal ordination) and the language of her Articles and Ordinal are *not*, as is sometimes supposed, so arbitrary, so arrogant and unchristian as to furnish any just ground for Nonconformity. Strictly speaking, I have no need to go one step beyond this. I think, however, that it may be useful—it may possibly make for re-union—if I indicate here some of the results which appear to me to accrue from the testimony of Scripture

interpreted, as surely common sense binds us to interpret it, in the light of the institutions of the early church. It is a legal maxim that ancient custom is the best interpreter of laws; that the truest exposition is that which is supplied by contemporaneous usage.[1] And were it not that we are sometimes blinded by prejudice or warped by interest, no one would ever have dreamed of denying that the early Christians must in the nature of things have understood the mind of the Spirit and the meaning of Scripture better than we can hope to do. If any arrogance is displayed on this question, surely it is displayed by those who insist that their private interpretation must be right and that the consent of the first ages counts for nothing. We have not learned much of CHRIST if we have not learnt to distrust our own judgment, especially when it runs counter to that of the saints and martyrs of the early church. And these principles conduct us to the following conclusions:—

1. *The New Testament knows nothing, the early church knew nothing, of any ministers who were not ministers of* "THE *church.*" Such an idea as "the clergy *and* ministers of *all denominations*" would have filled the "elders of the church" with astonishment and dismay. Just as there was "one body," so were there ministers of one body and none else. We are so accustomed to the idea of a "Baptist minister," and a "Wesleyan minister," and the like, that we never stop to reflect how entirely foreign all this is to the ideas and usages of the Apostolic age. What *would* St. Paul have thought and said about "ministers of all denominations"? Well, we know what he did say about denominations in the church.[2] The Christians of that age, it cannot be denied, would have been sorely puzzled what to make of a

Acts xx. 17; St. James v. 14.

1 Cor. iii 3, 4.

[1] *Consuetudo optimus legum interpres. Contemporanea expositio optima.*

[2] "The Apostle hears of these four parties with dismay. What then would he think of the state of the church now?"—*Prof. Marcus Dods*, on 1 Cor. i. 12.

CHAP. XXIII.

Baptist or Bryanite preacher.[1] They could only have exclaimed, "Elders we know, and deacons we know, but who are ye?"

2. *The New Testament knows nothing, the early church knew nothing, of settled*[1] *ministers who had not been* "*sent.*" Not merely "called" by the HOLY GHOST, but "sent;" visibly appointed, formally commissioned, by superior authority. The Apostles—the very name implies a mission—were sent by our LORD Himself. Even St. Paul, who was miraculously converted and supernaturally instructed, who was "an apostle, not of men, neither by man," was yet "separated" and designated for his work by the laying on of hands. Somehow people forget this when they claim to have their commission, like St. Paul, "direct from CHRIST Himself." They forget, too, that even if St. Paul had been "sent" without human intervention (which he was not), the apostolate was one thing and the ordinary ministry another. Are all ministers apostles? Can they show the "signs of an apostle" which St. Paul showed. Why, it might have been written aforetime expressly to combat the popular idea that "a minister has his commission direct from CHRIST," that "the HOLY GHOST said, *Separate me* Barnabas and Paul for the work," &c., and separated they were, then and there, not by this special message of the HOLY GHOST, but by the "laying on of hands." Even the Apostles, then, a special and exceptional order, were visibly and formally "sent." The deacons, again, and the presbyters were in turn visibly and formally "sent" by the Apostles, or by men specially

Rom. x. 15.

St. John xx. 21.

Gal. i. 1.

Acts xiii. 3.

1 Cor. xii. 29.

2 Cor. xii. 12; Rom. xv. 19.

Ver. 3.

Acts vi. 6. Acts xiv. 23.

[1] It has been crudely objected that they would be equally at a loss to understand a Dean, an Archdeacon, or a Canon. No doubt these offices were unknown in the first ages—they belong to a later period. But the early Christians would readily comprehend that these names were merely given to presbyters to whom special duties were assigned. No new order was created. A Dean is a presbyter of the one church, not a minister of a different church.

[2] The itinerant "prophets," of whom we have a picture in the *Didache*, were but a *temporary* order, connected with the miraculous gifts of the apostolic age.

commissioned by them to send others. It is true we cannot always say when or by whom this or that minister was sent,[1] but that is simply because the ministry is older than the New Testament, and that the latter only refers to the ministry incidentally, and never professes to furnish lists of all the presbyters ordained, or full particulars of ordinations. But the ordinations which it does providentially mention show what all the appointments of those days were like. They show that no man was recognised as a minister of the church merely because he was eloquent, or learned, or successful —that is a purely modern fancy, and moreover a fancy which even those who hold it do not act upon. The Wesleyans, for example, do not allow that a man is proved to be a minister of the Wesleyan body by his piety. They say that Wesleyan ministers are those only who have been appointed in a certain way, and no other. And yet these same persons call it arrogance and bigotry if we hold that piety and success cannot prove a man to be a minister of the "one body,"—if *we* contend that elders of the universal church are those who have been appointed in a certain way, and no other.

1 Tim. iii., v. 22; Tit i. 5.

See Appendix, Note E.

3. *The New Testament does not tell, the early church did not know, of any ministers who had been sent by their congregations.* On one occasion, and on one occasion only, and that for a special reason, were ministers of an inferior order *chosen* "by the whole multitude," but even then they were commissioned by the Apostles. Nothing can be more certain than that the ministers of the first days received their authority from above, not from below — from superior pastors, not from their flocks. It is to subvert the Scriptural order, to say nothing about common sense, for the flock to appoint the shepherd, the school of CHRIST its teachers, or the army of GOD its officers. The idea that the congregation

Acts vi. 1.

Ver. 6.

[1] It has been argued that, because no mention is made, say, of the ordination of Apollos, *therefore* he was never ordained. It might just as reasonably be contended that no monarch of whose coronation history does not furnish full particulars was ever crowned.

CHAP. XXIII.

can commission the pastor is found in a falsified or misprinted Bible—the so-called "Independents' Bible"—but nowhere in the canonical Scriptures.[1]

4. *The New Testament contains no trace, the church of Christ down to the time of the Reformation furnishes no instance, of ministers who had not been sent by superior ministers.* The senders in the first instance were the Apostles, then overseers or superintendents appointed by them, then "bishops" appointed by these. We search in vain for a single instance of any ordination, accepted for one moment by the church, when performed by mere presbyters. Happily we have on record three or four ordinations by presbyters—who, however, pretended for that purpose to be bishops—I refer to the cases of Colluthus, Eutychianus, and Musæus.[1] But their appointments were at once disallowed and repudiated by the church. No, for fifteen centuries after the Apostles, there were no regular ministers who had not been ordained by bishops.

Acts vi. 6, xiv. 23. 1 Tim. v Tit. i. 5.

5. *The New Testament knows nothing, the early church knew nothing, of bishops, priests, or deacons appointed without the laying on of hands.* If there is an instance—one single instance—let it be produced. Where is the bishop, where the lowly deacon even, who was accepted as such by the early Christians, or by any particular church, when the laying on of hands had been dispensed with? It is true this rite is not mentioned

[1] In an edition of the Bible, printed in 1638, the verse "Look ye out seven men . . . . whom *we* may appoint," &c. (Acts vi. 3), is found altered into "whom *ye* may appoint." &c. Cromwell has been charged with having paid £1000 to procure this alteration, but he cannot have been the guilty party, as the first misprint (1638) was before his accession to power. The serious thing is that the mistake—if such it was—was *repeated* in many editions published during the Commonwealth—hence the name "The Independents' Bible." The General Assembly, about A.D. 1690, thought the charge of wilful corruption of the text of sufficient importance to call for a public disclaimer. Whether the alteration was at first fraudulent or accidental, it shows significantly that the Bible *must be rewritten* if it is to cover Nonconformist ordinations.

[2] See Bingham, Antiq., p. 28.

expressly in the New Testament, or by the historians and controversialists of the church, *whensoever* ordination is mentioned, but then we could not possibly expect that it would be. All that we could expect to find is—just what we do find—the incidental recognition of this rite as one of the usages of the church.

6. *The New Testament affords us no warrant for believing that the will of God is not to be obeyed in smaller as well as in greater matters.* There are those who speak of "the laying on of hands," for example, as belonging to the "infinitely little,"[1] though they cannot deny that CHRIST and His Apostles practised it, and all ecclesiastical order is to them a thing of no moment. These are mere matters of "organisation," and they "care for none of these things." They forget that

> "A thing is great or little only to a mortal's seeming.
> It is but the littleness of man that seeth no greatness in trifles."

And then, having wantonly discarded the rules of Christendom, they complain that we "unchurch" them by disallowing their orders, whereas it is they who unchurch themselves. How can we, how dare we, pronounce it all the same whether apostolic institutions are obeyed or not? How dare we, much as we long for reunion with our separated brethren, purchase it at the sacrifice of apostolic order? But for this, it would be sinful in the Church to insist on canonical ordination as a *sine qua non* of the ministry. She has no right to demand it, if it is not an essential. If it is a thing indifferent, belonging merely to the *bene esse* of the Church, she ought in pure charity, as an overture towards reunion, to surrender it at once. She demands it, she must and will demand it, because it is a part of the sacred deposit committed to her care; because it is after "the pattern showed to us on the mount." She does not require her children to believe in apostolical suc-

See Appendix, Note F.

[1] *The Nonconformist*, March 6, 1884.

CHAP. XXIII.

cession.[1] All she asks of them is not to quarrel with *her* for "standing in the old paths;" for taking every precaution she can; for giving them every possible security for the due ministration of the word and sacraments.

And even if, for the sake of argument, we admit here that episcopacy belongs, not to the *esse* but to the *bene esse* of the Church, still our separated brethren cannot wonder that we are unwilling, even for the sake of winning or comprehending them, to relax this ancient rule. I observe that the Congregational Union of 1889 pronounces the "historic episcopate" an "insuperable obstacle to reunion;" and no doubt it occasioned them much surprise that we should let this stand in the way. But they forget that the moment the Church conceded this point—even supposing she were at liberty so to do—for the sake of conciliating them, at that moment would she destroy all chance of reunion with the far larger number of Christians of the Greek and Latin communions. Whatever episcopacy may be to us, it is a *sine qua non* with them. And, anxious as we are for reconciliation with Dissenters, they are not by any means the only Christians in the world from whom we are divided. Millions upon millions of Roman and Greek Catholics acknowledge the same FATHER, SAVIOUR, and COMFORTER as we, and we are bound to pray for the day when they too may be one with us. They too are "brethren;" are "members of the body;" and it would be a sorry bargain if, whilst opening a door to our brethren at home, we at the same time closed one for ever against our brethren abroad. So long as we desire the reconciliation of *all* Christians—and why should we not?—we must maintain the historic episcopate.

[1] It is often objected against the Church that many, perhaps most, of the clergy hold this view. But what community can control the private beliefs and theories of its officers? And surely this is a view which may be held without offence, and indeed with reason. Apostolical succession merely means that "the same rule holds good in the Christian Church as in every well-ordered secular government—namely, that officers cannot appoint themselves, but must derive their commission from the supreme central authority, or from persons empowered thereby."—*Church Quarterly Review.*

CHAPTER XXIV.

SACRAMENTAL GRACE.

"If a medium for communicating saving truth is accepted by us all, why should we find any difficulty in acknowledging a medium for communicating saving grace?"—*Rev. F. Watson.*

NEXT in logical order to the subject of the ministry, and before we consider either sacrament separately, stands the question of sacraments generally—the subject, in fact, of SACRAMENTAL GRACE, on which it is very necessary that something should be said. For here, speaking generally, Church and Chapel teaching find themselves distinctly at issue. It is true there has been a marked tendency of late years, both within and without the Church, to abandon the bald and narrow Zuinglianism of a former generation, but it is also true that the ministers and congregations of the Chapel do *not* hold that the sacraments are "outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us" (Catechism), or that "by them GOD doth work invisibly in us" (Article XXV.), nor do they believe them for a moment to be "generally necessary to salvation." In fact, I strongly suspect that there are not a few Nonconformist teachers who, if they were to get at the bottom of their own feelings on this question, would discover that they wished Christianity "were well rid of them"—of these two rites of our LORD'S own appointment—as a fruitful source of misunderstanding and superstition.[1] It is for this reason, I understand, that

[1] See the words of *The Nonconformist*, page 140.

CHAP. XXIV.

the Salvation Army has summarily abolished them. Anyhow, be that as it may, and be the tendencies of the age what they may, it is still almost impossible for Churchmen to speak of sacramental grace without provoking a feeling of pity, if not resentment, on the part of many Nonconformists. In those two words, as they think, lurk the germs of all superstition and priestcraft. The clergy who preach this grace are freely denounced as Sacramentarians or Sacerdotalists; they are said to put forms in the place of CHRIST; and more, they are often accused of plotting to lead the English people back to Rome. And this not only on the part of uninstructed persons, who naturally take up parrot-cries, but by the lips of the intelligent and high-minded leaders of Nonconformity—chairmen of Congregational Unions, presidents of Conferences, and the like—men who may naturally be supposed to have studied the question, and who certainly hold one side of it with a tenacious grasp. And yet, remembering the day when I raised some such cries myself, and thought that I did GOD service by so doing, I cannot but suspect that others are labouring under the same misconceptions as I was. For I now find that I condemned these opinions because I did not fully understand them; because I did not know that there was another side to the shield. I thought in those days that evangelical and sacramental views were mutually exclusive—as thousands think now—but I have lived to see that the latter are the complement and crown of the former. Without surrendering, so far as I know, one jot or tittle of evangelical belief, so far as its affirmations go—so that I find myself at one with Dr. Dale and Mr. Binney up to the point where they begin to *deny*—I have been led to see that the sacramental beliefs of eighteen centuries are in perfect harmony with the loftiest conceptions of a personal and spiritual religion. It is this deep conviction that emboldens me to address to Nonconformist seekers after truth, yes, and to some of my fellow-Churchmen, this apology for the often detested doctrine of sacramental grace.

And I begin by stating the points on which we and they are agreed. We are thoroughly agreed—

1. *That grace—grace of every kind and degree—can only come from God.* This needs no laboured proof. It is called "the grace of GOD," and He is called "the GOD of all grace." It is recognised in the opening verses of each Epistle. Indeed "grace" is sometimes but another name for GOD's indwelling; it stands for the working of GOD the HOLY GHOST. We are neither convinced nor comforted nor strengthened nor sanctified, by a quality, but by a living Person, even by Him in whom we live and move and have our being. So that *man* cannot possibly give grace: he cannot impart GOD, nor can he assume possession of the gifts of GOD. No priestcraft or divination can avail to do that. The best of all gifts must come from the greatest of all givers. It follows, too, that the sacraments cannot be *sources* of grace; they may be channels, conduits—that is the point in question—but more they cannot be. Whether grace is given through them or without them, it must come from heaven. "They that receive grace by sacraments or with sacraments," says Hooker, "receive it from Him, and not from them. For of sacraments the very same is true which Solomon's wisdom observeth in the brazen serpent, 'He that turned towards it was not healed by the thing he saw, but by Thee, O Saviour of all.'" Herein all Christians are agreed. And we are also agreed—

2. *That God gives grace freely.* That "grace is free" is an axiom. The very word (*gratia*) implies this. If it were otherwise, grace would be "no more grace." Nothing that man can do, therefore, can earn or merit Rom. xi. 6 or deserve GOD's grace. All Protestants insist that "works" cannot, but—a truth which they do not always realise—no more can repentance or faith. There is nothing meritorious in these; nothing meritorious, for example, in not making GOD a liar, which is what faith 1 John v. 10 amounts to. These can no more purchase grace than penances or pilgrimages could. All that man can do is to *hinder grace;* to frustrate it by impenitence or

CHAP. XXIV.

St. Matt. ix. 29; xv. 28, &c.

unbelief. It is true that "according to our faith" it is done unto us, but that is only another way of saying that we receive according to our capacity, not our deserts. Though grace is free and unmerited, GOD cannot fill what is full already, and impenitence and unbelief fill the heart, and pride and selfishness close it —to borrow the theological phrase, *ponent obicem*, they put a bar to grace, they shut it out from the soul. But that is all. We can hinder grace, but we cannot earn it. Furthermore, we are agreed—

3. *That God cannot give grace, either through sacraments or without them, to those who are unfit for grace.*[1] GOD cannot do through sacraments what His righteousness forbids Him to do in any case. If, that is to say, the sacraments are means of grace at all, they are only means of grace to the penitent and believing. The sacraments, whatever they may do, do not make the road to heaven any smoother or shorter. Still the soul must pass through the strait gate; still it must walk the narrow way. The popular idea about sacramental grace is that it somehow contrives to dispense, wholly or in part, with that repentance, and that faith, and that obedience which are the essentials of personal religion; whereas the truth is that GOD *cannot* (for He cannot do wrong) bless the impenitent through these channels, any more than He can directly and immediately. The doctrine of sacramental grace, it is true, implies that GOD uses *means;* that His grace ordinarily flows through *channels*, but it recognises no difference as to the hearts in which He works effectually, or the moral and spiritual qualifications which He demands. These remain the same, whether grace is mediate or immediate; whether it comes through the sacraments or direct from the finger of GOD. The question between us is—not whether GOD forgives and blesses the impenitent or the unbelieving, for the Churchman no less than the Nonconformist knows that He *cannot do that*—the question is whether

[1] "All receive not the grace of GOD which receive the sacraments of His grace."—*Hooker.*

He forgives and blesses the penitent and believing, *and these only*, directly, or through the medium of outward and visible signs and instruments. Why, even the Roman Church, which holds that the sacraments "contain grace" (*continere gratiam*) and "confer" it mechanically (*per ipsa sacramenta ex opere operato conferri gratiam*),[1] still speaks of those who place a bar to grace (*sacramenta gratiam ipsam non ponentibus obicem conferre*), and holds that the impenitent only receive CHRIST to their condemnation. The English Church is still more explicit as to the necessity for a right reception. "In such only as worthily receive the same [sacraments] have they a wholesome effect or operation, but they that receive them unworthily purchase to themselves damnation, as St. Paul saith."[2] I beg Nonconformists to observe that the doctrine of sacramental grace is effectually safeguarded against abuse by limiting the restriction of its benefits to such as fulfil the evangelical conditions of repentance and faith. But again, we are agreed—

4. *That God can give grace without sacraments or any such means.* No Churchman contends that "grace is tied to means." *Gratia non ligatur mediis* is a theological commonplace. Of course GOD can dispense with them if He pleases—in fact, He has sometimes done so. What we do deny is the common assumption that because GOD can do this, man may do so too. The king may suspend his own laws, but not so the subject. GOD is not tied to means, but we are tied to the use of them. Once more, we are agreed—

5. *That God generally works by means.* That He does this in the world of Nature everybody knows. We none of us look for our daily bread direct from GOD'S hand. Moreover, a moment's reflection will show that He generally works by means, even in the kingdom of grace. We have been told of late that "the union and contact [between CHRIST and His people] is immediate, spiritual"

[1] See Sess. vii. Can. vi. viii. of the Council of Trent.
[2] Article XXV.

CHAP. XXIV.

—that "nothing is to be between."[1] But it occurs to us to ask how many Christians have been directly evangelised by CHRIST or are now directly edified? If we ask the pious Nonconformist what brought him to CHRIST, he will answer that it was a sermon or a text of Scripture, or the conversation of a friend, or something of the kind. ("How shall they hear without a preacher?") But what does this mean? Why, that GOD has in every case used *means*—the voice of the man, the undulations of sound, the print and paper—to his conversion. If I ask again why he goes to chapel, he says it is for the "means of grace," for the Word read and preached, the hymns, the "pulpit prayer," &c. He recognises, that is to say, that God uses *means* for his growth and edification. And so it has always been. Our LORD CHRIST seldom wrought a miracle without some medium—clay or spittle, or the Pool of Siloam, or the laying on of hands. What again were apostles, prophets, evangelists, but means; for, as Bossuet observes, "the chief means is man." No, if "nothing is to be between CHRIST and the soul"—then we ought to pull down our churches and burn our Bibles. We do not, because we know that our souls are approached through the organs of sense. "A soul in flesh," says Richard Baxter, "is apt to use sense, and needs some help of it."[2] All Christians, then, are agreed that GOD uses means, material means, such means as print and sound, in His dealings with their hearts. The only point therefore on which we differ is—

6. *Whether the two sacraments of Christ's own appointment are to be excluded from the means of grace—whether they hold an inferior position in the economy of grace to print and paper and preaching?* This is the one point, so far as I can see, at issue between us. Are those sacraments which the Son of GOD Himself ordained, and ordained with so much solemnity; those two outward and visible signs which He introduced into His spiritual religion; as

[1] "Thoughts on Christian Sanctity," by the Rev. H. C. G. Moule.

[2] "A purely spiritual religion is suited only to purely spiritual beings."—Bartlett, *Bampton Lectures*, p. 103.

to which He used such striking language, and which, as we shall see, He made "generally necessary to salvation," are they so poor and inefficacious that we must rank them beneath a page of print? Allowing, as we must do, that GOD uses outward and visible means in dealing with our souls, and that these means are many and varied, must we draw the line at the two rites which alone CHRIST ordained, and say that these are not "means"—they are nothing more than empty signs? Are we to call CHRIST a formalist—which of course He was, if these are bare forms? No, we are compelled to allow them a place among the "means of grace" when we remember Who it was appointed them; that He appointed no other rites than these; that He appointed them with singular solemnity; that He made them conditions of salvation; and lastly, that He and His Apostles used language about them which is to the last degree dangerous and misleading if these are devoid of all grace. I do not cite this language or these Scriptures now—they will come before us later on.[1] But I repeat that the language both of our LORD and His Apostles, alike about Baptism and the Holy Supper, is grossly and cruelly misleading, and must minister to dangerous delusions, if the sacraments are *mere figures*, however edifying and significant, and have no place among the means and channels of grace. It has often been remarked that figurists instinctively shrink from using our LORD'S own words about His own ordinances. They invariably, though perhaps unconsciously, water down or qualify His language and that of His Apostles—a plain proof that such language does not agree with the Zuinglian or Dissenting view.[2]

[1] See pp. 178–198, and 216.

[2] See note on p. 160.

CHAPTER XXV.

BAPTISM—PART I.:—ITS OBLIGATION.

INFANT BAPTISM.

"The main inquiry is whether the point in debate between them be a fundamental article of the Christian faith. . . . Now I think that a question about the age or time of one's receiving baptism does not look like a fundamental, nor is so reputed in the general sense of Christians."—*Wall, Infant Baptism.*

From the Church's doctrine respecting the *sacraments* in general, we pass to her special teaching about Holy Baptism. And here we find ourselves at once face to face with perhaps the greatest of all stumbling-blocks in the path of pious Nonconformists. It is doubtful whether any other doctrine so sticks in their throats as does the doctrine of "Baptismal Regeneration," especially as they understand it. "The Puritans in Queen Elizabeth's time, and the Nonconformists in the reign of Charles II., justified their [opposition or] secession on the ground that 'the Church clearly teaches the doctrine of real Baptismal Regeneration.'"[1] It is because of this, as they consider, pernicious and soul-destroying belief that Churchmen are appealed to by some Dissenting writers to come out of the corrupt communion which proclaims it. It is the Church's teaching on this subject which has driven some clergymen out of her fold into Nonconformity. It is most necessary, therefore, if the breaches of Christendom are ever to be repaired, if we are not to continue "a house

[1] Nonconformists' Memorial, quoted by Dean Hook, "The Church and her Ordinances."

divided against itself," the scorn and derision of the enemies of Zion, that some one should ask whether this teaching is, after all, so unscriptural, so dangerous, as to compel a continuance in Nonconformity, and absolutely to forbid the re-union of English Christians.

But it is not only the teaching of the Church as to the *meaning* and *efficacy* of baptism that Nonconformists resent and denounce. Many of them are equally opposed to her language as to the *necessity* of this rite, and some of them object very strongly to her practice of *infant* baptism. I might reasonably decline in this volume to discuss the latter question at all. I might plead that when the "Baptists" have convinced their fellow-Nonconformists that they are all in the wrong, it will then be time enough for the Church to vindicate this practice of almost universal Christendom, but that so long as this sect constitutes a very decided minority, even amongst Dissenters, its peculiar views, like those of other similar though smaller bodies, might be passed over in silence. I think it well, however, partly for the sake of completeness and partly because many who are not Baptists are tainted with Baptist opinions, to devote a chapter to this question: Why does the Church baptize children? I answer: For the following reasons:—

1. *Because God loves all children.* It is because "we are persuaded of the goodwill of our Heavenly Father towards" all infants that we bring them to Him for His blessing. If GOD *loves* the child, then why may we not put the *mark* and seal of His love upon it? Infant baptism is the individual application of the love GOD has for all children.[1] By this sign we certify the child, not of any merits or deservings of his own, but of GOD's "favour and goodness towards him."

2. *Because the Jews by Divine command circumcised children.* Do you say that this is no argument? It would not be if Christianity were an entirely new reli- Lev. xii. 3

[1] See *Church Membership on Church Principles*, by Canon Travers Smith.

CHAP. XXV.

gion, suddenly launched into the world without precursor or preparation. But, so far from this, it is the child, the blossom and outcome and development of an older religion, viz., Judaism. In our Bibles the New Testament follows an *Old* Testament, and the religion of that Old Testament was just as Divine, just as true, in its time as Christianity is now. The *principles* which underlie the first underlie the second, for GOD is the author of both, and He cannot change. Moreover, CHRIST came "not to destroy the law, but to fulfil." If, therefore, the first covenant embraced children, the second cannot exclude them. If baby-circumcision was the will of GOD—and it *was* the will of God—why not baby-baptism?[1]

Gen. xvii. 10–14; Acts vii. 8; Rom. iv. 11; St. John iii. 5; Acts ii. 41; Gal. iii. 27, 28.

3. *Because baptism in the New Covenant takes the place of circumcision in the O'd.* Circumcision was, baptism is, the appointed rite for admission to the Church. Indeed, the two rites are found coupled together in Col. ii. 11, 12, where baptism is called "the circumcision of Christ." "Ye were circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, . . . having been buried with Him *in baptism*," &c.

4. *Because, if under the gospel children may not be baptized, then they are worse off now than under the law.* For the Jewish child could and did enjoy in infancy the high privilege of being brought into solemn covenant with the Eternal. He was all unconscious, was profoundly ignorant of what was being done, but none the less he was brought within the bond of the covenant by the act of circumcision. If, therefore, our children may not be brought into covenant with God—and they can only be brought into covenant by the act of baptism—then it follows that Christianity has made it a worse world for babes; it follows that the "covenant of works" was actually more merciful than the "covenant of grace," and that Moses' law was more compassionate to children than CHRIST'S gospel!

[1] So it is derisively called.

5. *Because the Jews, at and before the time of our Lord, baptized children.* This is practically beyond dispute. Proselytes to Judaism, if females, were baptized; if males, were baptized and circumcised; and children as well as their parents. Infant Baptism, *i.e.*, was an established usage when Christ gave the command, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them," &c. It is, therefore, morally certain that the Apostles, in the absence of all command to the contrary, would extend baptism to infants, as their fathers had always done; would make them "disciples," as they had before made them "proselytes." It is useless to ask, therefore, "Where is the baptism of infants commanded?" The question is "Where is it forbidden?" For who can doubt that it would have been forbidden if it had not been designed? Our Lord, of course, foresaw that infant baptism would become, as in fact it has become, the usage of almost universal Christendom; He foresaw that men would find, or think they found, distinct warrant for it in His own words. Is it credible that, foreseeing all this, He said not one word, one syllable, to caution them against it? Is this our idea of the Perfect Wisdom, of the "Teacher come from God"?

St. Matt. xxviii. 19.

St. Matt. xxviii. 19. St. Mark x. 13.

6. *Because our Lord pronounced children to be fit subjects of His kingdom.* There were men in His day who felt and acted precisely as the Baptists do now; who "rebuked" those who brought infants to Christ; who thought His kingdom was only for grown men, men who could understand and believe. But the idea filled Him with "indignation."[1] So far from infants being unfit for that kingdom, He says that grown men must become like them in order to be fit. He says that innocence, not intelligence, is the qualification; that

St. Mark x. 14, 15.

[1] "The sequence is not understanding of teaching first, and then blessing; but rather, His blessing first, and then by means of this, and founded on this, understanding of His teaching."—*Travers Smith.*

The same order is observable in 2 Cor. v. 18-20; St. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; Gal. iv. 9; Col. ii. 11, 12.

CHAP. XXV.

there is no virtue in belief, but that the barrier is disbelief. "Of such," He said, "is the kingdom of God." And He also said that baptism—for what else can "water and the Spirit" mean?[1]—is the door of entrance to His kingdom.[2] And now the Baptists tell us that those to whom the kingdom belongs of right may not be permitted to pass its portals!

St. John iii. 5.

7. *Because "all nations" were to be baptized, and all nations are largely composed of children.* Suppose the command had stood, "Go and disciple all nations, *circumcising* them," &c.; would the Anabaptist have denied circumcision to children? "Why, no," he would have said, "circumcision is mainly *for* children." Why does the word "baptizing," then, make all the difference, when infant baptism as an outward form for enrolling disciples was almost as familiar to the Jews as infant circumcision?

8. *Because to deny baptism to babes is to impugn the justice of God.* For these babes, you tell us, and the Baptists tell us, though unconscious, are nevertheless born in sin and are "by nature children of wrath." They have done nothing, said nothing, to stain their souls, and yet they are infected with Adam's sin, *i.e.*, with a "fault and corruption of their nature."[3] And so (the Baptist says) they must remain until they can understand and repent and believe. Till that day comes, no provision is made for them, no remedy is offered. But surely GOD can never have intended that men should grow up in the kingdom of darkness; that His grace should be denied till they are far on life's journey; that the remedy should not extend as far as the disease. Is it so that, needing regeneration, even as others, they may not receive the sacrament

[1] See p. 67.

[2] "New Testament baptism is not the seal of a past work of the Spirit, but the foundation of one to come. . . . . Reasons for ministering the rite are not found in the individual's faith, but in the certainty of GOD'S love to all men."—*Travers Smith.*

[3] Article IX.

of regeneration? What a libel is this on our GOD and Father! what a perversion of the Gospel of love! If unconscious infants are included in the first Adam's fall, surely they may have part in the second Adam's redemption.

9. *Because St. Peter, when he enjoined baptism, in the same breath mentioned children as partakers of the promise.* In Acts ii.—in the first sermon, preached on the day of Pentecost—he says, "Repent ye and be baptized every one of you . . . unto the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." And what are the next words? "For to you is the promise (*i.e.*, of forgiveness and the HOLY GHOST through baptism), and to your *children*." "Filled with the HOLY GHOST," he must have known that men would take these words to mean that children should be baptized; and yet not one word is said, then or at any other time, to warn or undeceive them. Acts ii. 38. Ver 33.

10. *Because St. Paul says the children of Christians are holy.* That is to say, they are "sanctified in the parents." Why are they then to remain outside of the commonwealth of the Church and "strangers to the covenant of promise"? 1 Cor. vii 14.

11. *Because the Apostles baptized "households," and households generally comprise children.* Do you say children are not mentioned? But the question is, Are they excluded? May *we* baptize "households"? The Baptists would say, "Certainly not, for some of them are sure to contain children." Well, that is just what we say. Yet the Apostles baptized "households." And the Church asks no more than to follow their example. See Acts xvi. 15, 33; 1 Cor. i. 16.

Such are in brief *some* of the reasons why the Church of the living GOD, the body of CHRIST at the present day, baptizes children; why the Church throughout the last eighteen centuries has baptized them, and why the Church will continue to baptize them to the end of the world.

But what if these arguments do not carry conviction to the minds of Baptists? What then? Why, this, that

CHAP. XXV.

the retention of Baptist opinions is no sufficient ground for separation from the one body. The Church of England makes provision for adult baptism. And even if she is mistaken in allowing and providing for the baptism of children, surely that is not an adequate reason for creating or maintaining a schism in the body. *In necessariis unitas, in non necessariis libertas*, &c. "No doctrinal error," says a Presbyterian writer,[1] "which does not subvert personal faith in CHRIST should be allowed to separate churches. . . . If we make our clear views a reason for quarrelling with other Christians and a bar to our fellowship with them, we forget that CHRIST is more than doctrine, and charity better than knowledge."[2]

[1] Dr. Marcus Dods.

[2] "The Baptists have built up a sect with a special name on the basis of a sacrament; which is, I humbly think . . . an uncatholic procedure; and as indefensible as would be the institution of a second sect, based on a reform of the Mass, to be called the *Lord's Supperist Denomination!*"—Rev. Edw. White (Congregationalist), *Life in Christ*, p. 291.

CHAPTER XXVI.

BAPTISM—PART II.:—ITS NECESSITY.

"By solemnly ordaining baptism our LORD made it obligatory on all who seek His favour, and thus made it a condition of salvation. For we cannot enjoy His smile whilst we refuse to obey His express commands."—*Professor Beet.*[1]

THE Church of England teaches in her Catechism that baptism is "*generally necessary to salvation.*" And what she means by the word "generally" is clear from the office for "the ministration of baptism to such as are of riper years," where she speaks of the "great necessity of this sacrament, *where it may be had.*" She does not affirm, she could not affirm, in the teeth of such a case as that of "the dying thief" (who obviously died unbaptized) that baptism is "*always* necessary to salvation," but she does affirm and proclaim its necessity, where it can be obtained. She says nothing, consequently, as to the doom of the unbaptized heathen, and as little to the fate of unbaptized infants; but of those who know about baptism and have the opportunity of being baptized, she says they must embrace it if they mean to be saved. And to many Nonconformists this teaching is most offensive. They think it fraught with danger. It seems to them to make baptism "a saving ordinance," and it is quite a commonplace with them that "baptism is *not* a saving ordinance." They regard it as of very little moment whether a man is baptized or not, if only he is "converted." Local preachers are often unbaptized, and occasionally glory in the fact. Many of the

See Note 1 p. 181.

[1] Manual of Baptism, p. 14. Mr. Beet is a Wesleyan.

CHAP. XXVI.

ministers never mention this rite in the pulpit except to minimise its importance, with the result that thousands of Nonconformists are never baptized at all.[1] The Salvation Army will not hear of its having anything to do with salvation. Nay, there are Christians who actually protest that baptism "takes away the glory of the cross!" We are compelled, therefore, to ask, "Is the Church's teaching true or false; Scriptural or superstitious? Which is it?"

Well, we turn to the page of Scripture, and we find that our Blessed LORD, "the Truth," spoke thus of baptism: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he *cannot enter* into the kingdom of GOD." I put it to you: *Is the language of the Church stronger than His language?* Is her statement more distinct and decisive than His was? It is of no use to say, though too often it is said, that "water" does not mean "water" here, but "the Spirit acting like water," or something of the kind.[2] For (1) you cannot find a single writer—certainly not one of any eminence—in the first fifteen centuries who interpreted these words thus,[3] nor (2) any theologians of the first rank since who have denied that they refer to baptism. Indeed, no other interpretation could ever have been suggested if Christians had not had their own private theories to prop up. I ask again, therefore: Does the Church's contention that "baptism is generally necessary to salvation" go beyond her LORD'S? Is she not simply echoing His words? But if this passage is still disputed — and nothing dies harder than theological prejudice[4]—let us take another. In St. Mark xvi. 16, our risen LORD

St. John iii. 5.

See Note 2, p. 181.

[1] Here is a significant fact. Dr. Bruce, the Chairman in 1888 of the Congregational Union, gives a statement of "the Catholic faith in its integrity," in which he *omits all reference to baptism!*

[2] See p. 67 above.

[3] "Of all the ancient, there is not one to be named that ever did otherwise either expound or allege the place than as implying external baptism."—*Hooker*.

[4] "Faith, fanatic faith, once wedded fast
To some dear falsehood, hugs it to the last."

declared, "He that believeth *and is baptized* shall be saved." Now, what conclusion can a candid mind draw from this sentence, but that baptism, as well as belief, is necessary to salvation? Again we ask: Is the doctrine of the Church in advance of CHRIST'S doctrine? Are we more dogmatic and decided than He was? Let us take a third text, Acts ii. 38. Why did St. Peter, preaching on the day of Pentecost, in the plenitude of the HOLY GHOST, say, "Repent and be baptized *every one of you* in the name of JESUS CHRIST for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the HOLY GHOST," if baptism is not "generally necessary" to pardon and grace—in other words, to salvation? Why must "every one of them" be baptized, if all the time baptism was so unimportant? Which comes nearest, I earnestly ask, to St. Peter's teaching—the language of the Church or that of the Chapel? Which, again, is the wider and more sweeping statement, the Church's, that "baptism is generally necessary," or St. Peter's, that "baptism *doth now save us*"? If it be objected that he goes on to say, "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh," &c., our answer of course is that the Church, when *she* speaks of baptism, means and says precisely the same as St. Peter means and says. Why, forsooth, should the Church be supposed to regard the bare rite as saving the soul, *ex opere operato*, when she states distinctly and repeatedly that the conditions of baptism are repentance and faith; when she actually defines saving baptism in St. Peter's own language?[1] But now let us turn to another Apostle, St. Paul, who testifies that God "*saved us* through the washing (Marg. 'laver') of regeneration," &c. Again we ask: Which is the ~~strongest~~ expression, his or the Church's? Moreover, why was St. Paul himself baptized if baptism is not obligatory on all? If "conversion" is everything, how is it that an Apostle who had been miraculously converted, and to whom our LORD Himself had spoken from heaven, must still "arise

1 Peter iii. 21.

Titus iii. 5.

[1] In the Office for Adult Baptism.

CHAP. XXVI.

Acts xxii. 16.

Acts x. 44–48.

St. Matt. iii. 14.

St. John iv. 1.

Acts xix. 1–5.

1 Cor. xv. 29.

and be baptized and wash away his sins"? or how is it, again, that Cornelius and his friends, who had received the gifts of the HOLY GHOST already, must nevertheless be baptized? Is the Church more exacting than were the Apostles? Or, if baptism really belongs to the "infinitely little," how is it that the forerunner, the messenger of CHRIST, was "John the *Baptist*"? How is it that our great Exemplar was Himself baptized—baptized notwithstanding the protest of John, and that His baptism was signalised by the descent of the HOLY GHOST? Or how is it, again, that "Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John"?[1] Or, if baptism is not a necessary rite, why must those who had been baptized once—unto John's baptism—be baptized again "in the name of the LORD JESUS," and why, lastly, were some of the early Christians "baptized for the dead"? Why, in short, should baptism everywhere meet us in the pages of Scripture if it is not an essential? It is observable that, as if to preclude mistake, the baptism of *every class* of converts is recorded, men, women, households, Jews, Samaritans, proselytes, disciples of John, &c. I submit unhesitatingly that these warrants of Holy Writ abundantly justify the moderate and guarded contention of the Church that "baptism is generally necessary to salvation." I submit that this language, so far from being an obstacle in their path, should lead Nonconformists—it has led some ministers—to reconsider their position, and to ask whether the position of the Church on this question, or the teaching of the Chapel, comes nearest to the word of inspiration. On this point, at any rate, the Church has Scripture at her back. She has not added to it, but neither has she

[1] It is idle to plead the next verse, "Jesus Himself baptized not, but His disciples," as weakening the obligation of baptism, for it is obvious that the disciples baptized with our LORD's full sanction, and by His command. And *qui facit per alium, facit per se.* Similarly, St. Paul's words are sometimes cited to show how little he thought of this rite, whereas all he says is that he baptized none of them, "*lest any should say* that he baptized *in his own name*" (1 Cor. i. 15).

taken from it—and some day this will be admitted. Some Nonconformists admit it already: I trust the candid reader is of the number. I trust that a careful examination of the Scriptures just cited has convinced him that it is the language of the Chapel, not that of the Church, which on this subject is full of danger, as a departure from the "faith of the Gospel."

Note 1. "I think that no Congregationalist would confess that they [the sacraments] were generally necessary to salvation."—Dr. H. R. Reynolds, *Langham St. Conference Report*, p. 28.

Note 2. Dr. Paton's contention (at the Langham St. Conference, *Report*, p. 26) that "there are two baptisms—one by water, which is accomplished by men . . . the other, which is given by CHRIST Himself, the baptism of the Spirit"—is directly in the teeth of St. John iii. 3, 5, and of Eph. iv. 5. "A birth cannot be divided. It can be but one thing," taking place at one time. A man cannot be born partly at one time and partly at another. Besides, if our LORD "meant by being 'born of water,' a mere ceremony of external profession, and by being 'born of the Spirit,' the great internal change, then He would elevate the mere external reception of the ceremonial rite . . . to an equality with the great internal spiritual change, for He calls them jointly by the name of 'birth,' and asserts that both are needful to salvation."—Sadler, *Church Doctrine*, p. 51.

CHAPTER XXVII.

BAPTISM—PART III.:—BAPTISMAL REGENERATION.

"Baptism doth challenge to itself but the inchoation of those graces, the consummation whereof dependeth on mysteries ensuing."—*Hooker.*

Is the doctrine of "Baptismal Regeneration," as held and taught by the Church of England, an unscriptural and pernicious error? Does it furnish a valid reason why Nonconformists should hold aloof from her communion?—these are the questions to be considered in this chapter.

That it is very generally and very pertinaciously believed to be such, no one who knows much of the mind of Dissent can possibly doubt. It has been, it is still, alleged as the head and front of the Church's errors.[1] But is it possible that the Church's teaching on this head is entirely misunderstood? Is it possible that here, as elsewhere, the Prayer Book only reproduces the difficulties of Scripture; only echoes the startling language of inspiration? I shall hope to prove that this is the case, and that therefore the Church's baptismal teaching is a reason for joining, not for leaving, her fold.

Now the baptismal teaching just mentioned is to be

[1] See p. 196. "All other difficulties," says the Rev. Edward White, "are trivial in comparison with this." "We can consent to no union which would express connivance with the soul-destroying error on the subject of baptism, which is the first lesson of the Catechism."—*The Freeman.*

found for the most part in the Articles (XXV.–XXVII.), the Catechism, and the Offices for Baptism and Confirmation. In these the Church teaches:—

1. That in baptism *infants* are unconditionally *regenerated.* It will suffice to quote the Baptismal Office: "Seeing now that this child *is regenerate.*" And again: "We yield Thee hearty thanks . . . that it hath pleased Thee to *regenerate* this infant with Thy Holy Spirit." And finally, the Order of Confirmation: "Who hast vouchsafed to *regenerate* these Thy servants with water and the Holy Ghost."[1] It is true that baptism is generally preceded by prayer, by a profession of faith, and by promises of repentance and obedience; and it has been argued that the regeneration of the child is the result of, or depends upon, these prayers and promises. But, not to insist on the fact that this would be to make GOD'S grace and mercy, yes, and the child's salvation, contingent (not indeed on its own merits — an idea utterly opposed to the spirit of the Gospel), but (still more strange and inconceivable!) *on the merits of its parents or sponsors*, what shall we say of those who are baptized privately—without any profession of faith or any promises of repentance or obedience? For the Church pronounces *these* "regenerate" no less than the other. The language she uses about the first in no wise differs from the terms in which she speaks of the second. It must be allowed, therefore, that the Church's teaching is that in and through baptism, as GOD'S appointed ordinance, and by GOD'S free and sovereign mercy, quite apart from any action or profession on the part of parents or sponsors, the baptized child is "regenerated."

2. The Church teaches that in and by baptism adults are regenerated, not universally, but only when *they repent and believe.* In their case there are conditions—the unchanging conditions of the Gospel. The benefits

[1] In Article IX. the two words "regenerate" and "baptized" are alike translations of the word *renati* in the Latin Version. This shows clearly what is the doctrine of the Church.

CHAP. XXVII

of baptism, that is to say, are only assured to those who repent and believe, when they are capable of repenting and believing. Hence the Article speaks of "those who receive baptism *rightly*" as alone recipients of the blessings of baptism, and the Office for Adult Baptism bids men "earnestly believe that [GOD] will favourably receive these present persons *truly repenting* and *coming unto Him by faith*." In addition to which, it is to be remembered that no adult *can* be baptized who has not made a solemn profession of faith, and who has not with his own lips made as solemn promises of repentance and obedience. It is assumed, and reasonably assumed, that the man who says these things means what he says; that he would not approach CHRIST'S ordinance with a lie upon his lips; and upon the strength of this profession and these promises, after coming to the "laver of regeneration," he is pronounced "regenerate." Such, in brief, is the teaching of the Church on this subject.

But now the question presents itself: "What does the Church mean by the term 'regenerate'?" *The Church does not mean by that word what Nonconformists mean by it.* For they use it in a purely modern and conventional sense; they understand by "regeneration" nothing else than "conversion." With them, the two terms are synonymous. But it is not so in Holy Scripture or the Prayer Book. The word "regeneration" is only found in Scripture twice. Once, in St. Matt. xix. 28, it is used figuratively of the "new birth" or new order which CHRIST shall bring in at His coming; in the other place, Titus iii. 5, it is connected with baptism —the "laver" or "bath" of "regeneration." The "new birth" is also spoken of in St. John iii. 5, and here again it is connected with the water of baptism. "Conversion"—a word which, by the way, only occurs once in Scripture (in Acts xv. 3), though the verb "convert" or "be converted" occurs several times in the Authorised Version: it is very significant that in the Revised Version (with one exception) these words disappear, and "turn" and "be turned" take their place—"conver-

St. James v. 19.

sion" in Scripture refers to the outward and visible change which takes place when a man *turns* from Paganism to Christianity, or from the power of Satan to God—that change, in fact, of life and character which accompanies repentance. But this change—and it is a necessary change—is never confounded with "new birth," never connected with the ministration of baptism. Nor were the two words ever confounded till within comparatively recent times. When the Bible was translated, when the Prayer Book was compiled, no one ever thought of identifying them. This has been pointed out again and again, and by divines who command the respect and confidence of Nonconformists; it may suffice if I mention Charles Simeon and Archbishop Whately.[1] No, the Church *does not* and *cannot* mean by this word either "conversion" or anything at all like it, repentance, assurance, salvation, or sanctification. She does not mean it, because down to the sixteenth century the word was never used in any such sense. She cannot mean it, because the term "new *birth*" cannot possibly convey the ideas of manhood or maturity. It speaks obviously only of a beginning; of the sowing of the seed, not of the subsequent growth, still less of the ripening of the harvest. "Regeneration" implies, and this is all that it implies, the conception, the implantation, and commencement of a new life; a spiritual, not an animal or psychical life; a life as real as our natural life—see St. John iii. 6—but a life which, like our natural life, must be cherished, must be fostered, and fed, and guarded,[2] or, just like our natural life, it will be stunted, and enfeebled, and ultimately quenched. 1 Thess. v. 19.

Of course, as I shall hope to show hereafter, baptism

[1] Mr. Simeon points out that the Baptismal Service itself, after calling the child or man "regenerate," teaches us to "look to GOD for that total change of heart and life which *long since their* [the Reformers] *days had begun to be expressed by the term regeneration.*" For Whately's words, see his "Logic," Appendix, art. "Regeneration;" also his "Parish Pastor," p. 150.

[2] Hence, perhaps, in Titus iii. the "laver of regeneration" is followed by the mention of the "renewing of the HOLY GHOST."

CHAP. XXVII.

embraces other blessings, as, *e.g.*, the forgiveness of sins, admission into the church, &c., but with these we are not concerned now. Now, we are dealing exclusively with the Church's doctrine of baptismal *regeneration;* and this "regeneration," we have seen, in the nature of things, can only be a beginning, the beginning of a spiritual existence, of the life of GOD, created in the inner man by the power of the HOLY GHOST. As to the continuance or perfection of that life, the word says nothing.

And is it so very presumptuous, is it so superstitious to believe that GOD has ordained the rite of baptism—one of the two rites of CHRIST's own appointment, and a rite which He twice pronounced to be necessary to salvation—as the ordinary channel for conveying this blessing? Only the channel or means—no more; the blessing, the grace, must of course come from GOD Himself. It is universally admitted that in other matters "GOD works by means." Why may He not use a means or instrument here? Why may not the water of baptism be precisely like the water of the Jordan to Naaman, the water of Siloam to the man born blind, &c., none of them having the least efficacy in themselves, but each of them ordained of GOD to be the outward and visible means of conveying His gifts and blessings to the dutiful recipient?

2 Kings v.

St. John ix.

Anyhow, if this is superstitious, it is a superstition which our HOLY LORD is largely responsible for, for He it was who connected (and so taught us to connect) "the water" and "the Spirit." It is a superstition which St. Peter undoubtedly shared, for he made "the gift of the HOLY GHOST" contingent on men's being baptized, every one of them. It is a superstition with which St. Paul is deeply tainted, as his teaching in 1 Cor. vi. 11, Gal. iii. 27, Rom. vi. 3, and especially in Titus iii. 5, proves. Assuredly, if Churchmen are in error in holding this belief, they are in error in good company. The Church only teaches this doctrine because she has received it from our LORD and His Apostles.

St. John iii.

Acts ii. 38.

CHAP. XXVII.

And that we have not misinterpreted the mind of our LORD and His Apostles, that we are not insisting on our mere private interpretation of the Scripture, is proved by the fact—the admitted fact—that, rightly or wrongly, this doctrine of "baptismal regeneration" has been the belief of Christendom for many centuries, as it is the belief of the major part of Christendom to-day. Mr. Beet allows that this doctrine has been "accepted with general consent in the Ancient Church from the third century onward;" but then he hastens to say that the church, "even when unanimous, is not infallible."[1] That may be so, but at least it is many thousands of times more likely to be right than the individual Christian who starts another view. Theology is not like other sciences; here "what is new is not true, and what is true is not new." Besides, we are entitled to ask how it came to pass, if this doctrine is a pestilent error, or if it is anything like what it is commonly called, that it met with such ready and widespread acceptance amongst Christians? Were they in a conspiracy against the faith once delivered to the saints? How it is that orthodoxy and zeal for CHRIST and a purer creed are confined to these later centuries and to insignificant bodies of men—bodies, too, that constantly disagree with one another? Surely the *consent* of the church says more for this ancient interpretation of Holy Writ than the endless *differences* of Dissent say against it.

Nor does the difficulty stop here. For if this tenet is untrue, then what can we think of GOD'S church, of the society which our LORD founded for the preservation and proclamation of His truth? What can we think of it, and what must the world think, if an article of faith as widely and continuously held and taught—held, not otiosely, but after it has been threshed out again and again—a doctrine of which, if of any, it may be said "*quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*," is after all a noxious error? If this is so, then how can the world

1 Tim. iii. 15.

[1] Manual, p. 54.

CHAP. XXVII.

repose the least confidence in the Church's teaching any longer? Its credit is gone; it is utterly compromised and publicly disgraced. What hope can we have, for example, that Mr. Spurgeon or Professor Beet will not mislead us, when so many doctors and divines, wiser than they, have both been misled and have misled others—have actually been teaching "salvation by legerdemain"? Nonconformists do not seem to see that in bringing railing accusations against this ancient and widespread belief, they are sawing at the branch on which they are themselves sitting. If they succeed in proving their point, neither they nor we can ever expect any one to listen to our teaching again.

But I imagine that many, at least of the more learned Nonconformists, find no difficulty in the Church's teaching as to the efficacy of baptism in the case of adults. Professor Beet, the last and one of the ablest writers on this question, decidedly does not.[1] His complaint is that we apply to *infant* baptism (which he upholds) the benefits which in Scripture are predicated of the baptism of believers. He says that "the difference between a baptism which is a personal confession of faith and another in which the baptized one does nothing whatever is absolute." He allows that the former brings the blessings of regeneration, but (following in this particular the lead of Dr. Mozley in his "Baptismal Controversy") he denies that we have any proof that the same or similar blessings are granted to unconscious infants. I proceed, therefore, to ask on what grounds we hold and believe in the unconditional regeneration of infants. I proceed, therefore, to ask on what grounds

[1] Manual of Baptism, p. 50. It cannot but be gratifying to Churchmen, so long accustomed to hear this doctrine, in *any* shape, denounced in unmeasured terms, to find that the "books of the New Testament" have converted a divine of Mr. Beet's reputation into an apologist for this part of the Church's belief. Surely this conclusion, which must have been *forced* upon him, in the teeth of all his prepossessions, by sheer weight of Scriptural evidence, will ere long commend itself to other Nonconformists. But herein he only follows Mr. Wesley, who affirms that "Baptism administered to real penitents is both a means and seal of pardon. Nor did GOD ordinarily in the primitive church bestow this on any, unless through this means."—*Notes on the New Testament*, on Acts v. 16.

we hold and believe in the unconditional regeneration of *infants* in baptism.

On the ground—the obvious and unassailable ground—that whilst they cannot do anything—*any more than the rest of us can*, however conscious and intelligent we may be—to *merit* or *deserve* this gift at GOD'S hands, so neither can they do anything—as, unhappily, the rest of us, the adults, can—to *hinder and prevent* that gift. For Professor Beet's objection springs out of the common error (with which indeed Nonconformist theology is, quite unconsciously, saturated), the common but dangerous error, that our faith and penitence *procure* for us GOD'S grace and blessing; whereas the truth is that repentance and faith are no more meritorious than alms or ordinances, and can no more win pardon or regeneration for us than fasts and pilgrimages; the truth is that *it is not repentance and faith that earn or win God's grace, but it is impenitence and unbelief that hinder it.* That grace, we often say, is always free, always flowing. Nothing that we can do can merit it; we can but frustrate it. Is it not so? I think Professor Beet will hardly deny it; indeed, it cannot be denied without bringing in at once the old insidious heresy of *human merit and deserving.* And if this be so, if "the blessings of baptism are," not as Professor Beet contends, "obtained by faith," but are only *hindered by unbelief*, then it follows that baptized infants must share in the blessings of baptism. This question was settled long ago by the great thinkers of Christendom. Their view has ever been that infants being unable *ponere obicem*, to raise any barrier against GOD'S grace (which adults can do), are *more* assured of the blessing of regeneration than adults can be, whose faith, &c., can do nothing to earn this gift, whilst their impenitence or unbelief may make it of none effect. For this obvious reason we believe that our LORD, who took little children into His arms, laid His hands on them and blessed them, blesses unconscious children still.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

BAPTISM—PART IV.:—BAPTISM FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS.

"What I say to one I say to all the baptized who hear me this day: You are freely justified by the grace of GOD in CHRIST: ye have received the seal of the righteousness which is by faith."—*Luther, Table-Talk.*

BAPTISMAL regeneration is by no means the only difficulty which Nonconformists find in the Church's teaching as to the purposes and effects of this ordinance of CHRIST. They think—or at least many of them do—it equally erroneous, equally dangerous, that she should preach in and through baptism "THE REMISSION OF SINS."

It is needless to cite at length the passages in which such teaching is contained. It may suffice to refer to the Nicene Creed, the xxviith article, and the Offices for Baptism and Confirmation. Of these, the last is perhaps the most explicit: "Who hast vouchsafed to regenerate these Thy servants by water and the HOLY GHOST, and *hast given unto them forgiveness of all their sins.*"

Now, can such doctrine be defended? Is it evangelical? Is it rational? Above all, is it Scriptural? Or is it from first to last a deadly error brought in by the enemy of souls, to lead men to a blind trust in carnal ordinances instead of a living faith in the LORD JESUS CHRIST? We may perhaps be permitted to remark that this doctrine, whatever it is, is not, as the Nicene Creed shows, peculiar to the Church of England. Rightly or wrongly, it undoubtedly represents the belief

of the early Christians; it was for many centuries the teaching of universal Christendom; it is still the belief of by far the larger number of Christians. It was firmly held by Martin Luther;[1] it finds a place in the pages of John Wesley. But let that pass. The Nonconformist asks, and he has a right to ask, for *Scripture* warrants for the to him strange and unevangelical idea that the Divine forgiveness is any way connected with a few drops of water and a few words, or (as it has recently been expressed) depends on the "waving of the dripping hand of a [possibly] thoughtless or bad man."[2] We proceed, therefore, to ask what authority can be alleged out of Holy Scripture for these twin doctrines:—

1. That baptism conveys the forgiveness of their sin —that is to say, of *original* sin; of *actual* transgressions they are incapable—to all *infants;* and

2. That baptism conveys forgiveness of all sin, both original and actual, to such adults, and only such, as truly repent and unfeignedly believe the gospel.

Let us take for convenience the case of adults first, and the more so because this is naturally the kind of baptism which comes before us in the pages of the New Testament. The baptisms of the first century were, for the most part, as those of the mission-field are now, and for the same reason, adult baptisms—baptisms of men and women capable of and professing repentance and faith. Well, what do we read as to the effect of baptism on these penitent and believing adults? Do the Scriptures scout the idea, as the popular theology of the day does, that a ceremonial act had or could have anything to do with their *forgiveness?* Is it possible that the inspired Word countenances the belief, now pronounced to be so dangerous, and also so repugnant to commonsense, that a formal act—"the waving of dripping hands"—can come between the sinner and his salvation, and that "generally" the element of water must

[1] See chapter xviii. p. 121, note.
[2] Professor Beet, Manual, p. 52.

CHAP. XXVIII.

be used, and a form of words must be said before the anxious soul can have "perfect remission and forgiveness"? Let us see.

Yes, we find this (so-called) pestilent and Popish doctrine countenanced, and in a very remarkable way, in the very "beginning of the Gospel of JESUS CHRIST," for John, the forerunner, "the Baptist," preached "the baptism of repentance *for* [or *unto*] *the remission of sins.*" Although his baptism did not convey the HOLY GHOST, yet it *did* convey—to the penitent soul—the forgiveness of sins. It is not the Church, it is Holy Scripture, makes this statement. If, then, the former teaches error, in connecting forgiveness with a ritual act, the latter teaches it no less, for no one will maintain that the baptism appointed by CHRIST was *less efficacious* than that of John. No; if the Church herein misleads and deceives, the Word of God does the same. The two stand or fall together. The Bible, that Bible which is so loudly proclaimed to be "the religion of Protestants," has led the way. The Church has only followed its lead, only echoed its language. Even John's baptism, if the Bible is true, carried with it "the remission of sins."

St. Mark i. 4.

Acts i. 5.

But this is not the only text which proclaims a doctrine which, *when the Church teaches it*, is said to be soul-destroying. In Acts ii. 38 we have the conclusion of St. Peter's great sermon, spoken on the day of Pentecost. Surely, if ever words were directly inspired, these were. The Apostle who uttered them was "filled with the HOLY GHOST" (ver. 4). And, guided and taught by the HOLY GHOST, he was led to say, "*Repent and be baptized* every one of you in the name of JESUS CHRIST *for the remission of sins*," &c. "Baptized unto the remission of sins!" What stronger warrant can the Church need for her teaching than this? If her language is unevangelical, if it is dangerous, our answer is that at any rate it is Scriptural. She did not foist this text into Scripture; she found it there. And all the blame that is heaped upon her, all the charges brought

against her baptismal teaching, she has to bear simply because she *takes Scripture as she finds it;* simply because she dare not ignore or reject the plain statements of Holy Writ, when they do not square with human theories. Yes, this "Popish doctrine" may be traced back to the day of Pentecost. The HOLY SPIRIT of GOD, speaking by St. Peter, has connected the "remission of sins" with the rite of baptism. Where has the Church gone beyond his words? In what respect does her doctrine differ from his?

But her teaching—this teaching which she is asked to repudiate in order to conciliate Nonconformists—is covered by a third text, Acts xxii. 16. St. Paul has been converted by miracle. The LORD JESUS has spoken to him from heaven. But see! a ritual act, "the waving of a dripping hand," stands between him and forgiveness. A message from GOD is brought to him, and it is this: "Arise and *be baptized* and *wash away thy sins.*" But baptism has nothing to do, we are told, with forgiveness! It is dangerous to a degree to connect them! *Yet they are connected here.* I put it to the candid Nonconformist: Has he ever heard language like this in the chapel? How many ministers has he known who would dare to use such words? Has he not repeatedly heard this very teaching denounced as the Church's capital error? And yet the Church only borrows the words of inspiration. If the Article is in error, then what shall we say of Ananias's words? If the Office for Adult Baptism deceives souls, what shall we say of the "sure word of prophecy"?

And it were easy to cite other Scriptures, as, *e.g.*, 1 Cor. vi. 11; Eph. v. 26; Tit. iii. 5; Heb. x. 22, the baptismal teaching of which is the same. It were easy also to prove that we only interpret these texts as the first Christians interpreted them. But it may be more useful if instead we try to understand how this fierce prejudice against any idea of a remission of sins in and through baptism has arisen. It arises from a feeling which every Churchman should respect—from jealousy

CHAP. XXVIII.

for real, personal religion; it springs from a righteous dread of our substituting mere forms for a radical moral and spiritual change. The idea has been, and is, that we ascribe forgiveness, the forgiveness of sin—sin against GOD—to a mechanical act, and that baptism absolves *ex opere operato*, quite apart from the moral fitness of the candidate.[1] But how entirely different is the real teaching of the Church! She holds that only GOD can forgive sins; that GOD forgives freely, without any *quid pro quo* (whether of faith, or repentance, or austerities, or alms-deeds on our part), but that GOD *cannot* forgive the impenitent or unbelieving. No baptism, therefore, can wash away the sins of such persons. So far Church and Chapel are, or ought to be, agreed. But here the Church goes a step farther. She observes that *obedience* must naturally be a condition of forgiveness, no less than faith and penitence. Not that obedience merits, but that disobedience frustrates, the grace of GOD. Hence she holds generally that just as forgiveness can not embrace the impenitent, even though they are baptized, so neither can it reach the disobedient who refuse to be baptized. She sees in baptism a test—in many cases it is the crucial test—of obedience. She also sees in it a means of grace. She cannot explain the Scriptures cited above except on the supposition that baptism, whilst it is not a charm, is a channel, an "instrument by which the promises of the forgiveness of sins . . . are visibly signed and sealed." What is there superstitious or unevangelical in this belief? To us the creed of the Chapel appears to be unevangelical because it assumes (1) that GOD is reluctant, or hard to be persuaded, to forgive sins, whereas all the difficulty is

[1] Mr. Spurgeon, for example, has unhappily lent his great powers to disseminate this idea. In a sermon preached on July 5, 1864, he says: "The man who has been baptized or sprinkled says, I am saved! I am a member of CHRIST! Call *me* to repentance! Call *me* to lead a new life! No matter what my life and conversation is, I am a child of GOD. It is true I drink and swear and all that, but you know I am an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven."

with us, not with Him, and (2) that man must work himself up to an attitude of faith in order to procure his pardon from GOD. The doctrine of baptismal grace, on the other hand, excludes all idea of human merit; it ascribes forgiveness to the free and undeserved goodness of GOD.

But perhaps we shall be told that the real difficulty lies in the case of *infant* baptism. Can unconscious infants receive remission of sins? Why not, if infants, though unconscious, are born in sin? If without any act of their own they are infected with original sin—and this is the belief of the Chapel—why may they not in baptism, without act or effort of their own, receive remission of that sin—nay, is it not simple justice that they should do so? In fact, this is one argument for infant baptism—that otherwise no sufficient provision would be made in the covenant of *grace* for undoing the consequences of the Fall. If unconscious children are by nature children of wrath, partakers of the nature of the old Adam, why may they not, whilst still unconscious, be made partakers of the second Adam, and so the children of grace? No; the difficulty, whatever it may be, is *much less* in the case of infant than of adult baptism, for (1) infants have no *actual* sins to be forgiven, and "original sin," as it is called, is rather a "fault and corruption of the nature of every man" than a sin; and (2) they cannot, as adults can, frustrate the grace of GOD by impenitence or unbelief. To maintain that baptism brings blessings to the conscious and believing adult, and none to the unconscious child, is to contradict His words Who said that "of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Article IX.

CHAPTER XXIX.

BAPTISM—PART V.:—CONCLUSION.

"The birth of a soul is a mystery, and so is the birth of an insect. Till we can solve the mystery of life in its lowest forms, we need not contend about the way in which its highest come into being."—*Heard, Tripartite Nature of Man.*

But we have not yet exhausted the objections of our Nonconformist brethren to the teaching of the Church on the subject of baptism. No examination of their difficulties would be complete which overlooks the words of the Catechism: "My baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." It is upon these words that Professor Beet fastens in his recent volume, and these are the words which Nonconformists invariably allege[1] when they notice Church teaching in the pulpit or resist it in our public elementary schools.

It is quite true that this phrase, as Mr. Beet observes, is only "a concise and clear statement of the doctrine" of baptismal regeneration[2]—a doctrine which has already been discussed in these pages. But it merits, nevertheless, a separate notice, if only because of the opportunity it affords of combating some further objections advanced against this ancient and Catholic belief.

But let me begin by entreating Nonconformists to observe that this, their latest champion, unreservedly accepts this language as *a correct expression of the effect*

[1] See note, page 182.

[2] It would be more correct, perhaps, to call it a concise statement of the effects or results of baptismal regeneration.

of baptism on the penitent and believing adult. According to him, the devout adult *may* say—what the person baptized in infancy may *not* say—"My baptism, wherein I was made a member of CHRIST, the child of GOD," &c. These are Professor Beet's words: "Undoubtedly the Apostles assume that their readers are members of CHRIST, children of GOD, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. They assume also, as Mr. Sadler properly shows,[1] that their readers entered this state of blessed privilege through the gate of baptism." It is with deep satisfaction that I record this admission, as it marks a prodigious advance towards agreement. And as Mr. Beet speaks of this as "undoubtedly" the view of the Apostles, my first idea was I might now spare myself the trouble of proving it. But as I cannot, with my recollections of Nonconformity, persuade myself that there are many Dissenters who would accept this estimate of the effects of adult baptism, and as the idea of "baptismal regeneration" in any shape, whether of adults or infants, has been simply hateful to them, I think it well to cite some of the Scriptures which, in addition to those already quoted, seem to Churchmen to justify and require the language of the Catechism. I italicise the salient words.

A member of Christ. See 1 Cor. xii. 12, 27: "*Baptized* into *one body* . . . ye are the body of CHRIST and severally *members thereof*." Gal. iii. 26, 29: "As many of you as were *baptized into Christ* did put on CHRIST . . . ye are all one man in CHRIST JESUS." Ephes. v. 25, 30: "Having cleansed it [the Church] by the *washing* [Greek, *laver*] *of water* with the Word . . . because we are *members of His body*." Remembering, too, that this "one body" is the Church, we may cite 1 Cor. vi. 15–19, xii. 12–28; Ephes. iv. 25. See also Rom. vi. 3, 4. Ephes. i. 22, 23; Col. i. 18, &c.

The Child of God. Inasmuch as we are "children of

[1] The reference is to Prebendary Sadler's "Church Doctrine—Bible Truth," and to his "Second Adam and the New Birth."

CHAP. XXIX.

GOD," *because* we are members of CHRIST; because, having "put on CHRIST," we put on sonship at the same time, the texts cited above apply here. And inasmuch as, if we are children, we are "*also heirs*, heirs of GOD, and joint heirs with CHRIST," the same Scriptures prove us to be at the same time

Gal. iii. 26, 27.

Rom. viii. 17.

Inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven. But this is also taught directly in Gal. iii. 26–29, "Ye are all *sons of God*, through faith in CHRIST JESUS. For as many of you as were *baptized* into CHRIST did put on CHRIST. And if ye are CHRIST'S, then are ye . . . *heirs*," &c.; and in Titus iii. 5, 7, "He saved us by the *washing* of regeneration . . . that we should be made *heirs*," &c.

I only cite these texts, of course, to prove that *adults* —and those penitent and believing adults—are made in baptism (what the Catechism says that *infants* are also made) "members of CHRIST, children of GOD," &c. But I do submit that, especially when they are taken in combination with those other Scriptures (alleged in preceding papers) which connect baptism with regeneration, with remission of sins, and with the efficient cause of all, the gift of the HOLY GHOST, the sturdiest Nonconformist need not fear to follow Mr. Beet's lead, and henceforth to recognise in this teaching of the Church the "undoubted" teaching of the Apostles.

Acts ii. 38.

But can the same words be rightly used of the baptism of *infants?* Mr. Beet answers decidedly, No. He says that "there is not one word in the New Testament which even suggests in the slightest degree that spiritual blessings are, or may be, conveyed to an infant by a rite of which he is utterly unconscious." He complains that "to teach that an infant is brought into a new relation to GOD, or undergoes an inward change by means of an outward rite of which he is utterly unconscious, is to introduce an element altogether alien to the whole tenor of the Gospel." He says the grand mistake of Church writers is that they "assume silently that whatever is said in the New Testament about baptism and baptized persons is true also of baptized

infants."[1] To this contention let us now address ourselves.

And first we observe that Mr. Beet is hardly consistent with himself. For side by side with the strong statements just quoted, he writes that he "by no means implies that no spiritual blessing to the infant accompanies baptism." "Far be it from me (he says) to limit the mercy of GOD towards a little one presented to Him by the believing hands of loving parents—hands held up by the faith and prayer of the people of God." But in that case spiritual blessings *are* sometimes conveyed to an infant by means of a rite of which he is "utterly unconscious"—they are conveyed, that is to say, when the conditions are just those which the Church in her public office contemplates. Again, in one place he denies that "spiritual blessing follows *invariably* [*i.e.*, it *may* follow] the performance of an outward rite," &c., whilst in another he distinctly rejects the idea that "such blessings are or may be [*i.e.*, they can *never* be] conveyed to an infant," &c. The two statements seem to me to be irreconcilable, and I cannot but think that the learned Professor has unconsciously entangled himself amid the difficulties of his own creation.

See Note, p. 203.

But let this pass. Let us now proceed to ask whether any "spiritual blessing" was conveyed to the infants on whom our LORD CHRIST laid His hands? That He "blessed them" is undeniable; that "He laid His hands on them" *to* bless them (compare chap. vi. 5, 56; vii. 32, 33; viii. 22–25 of the same Gospel) is also undeniable; that they were "utterly unconscious" will of course be allowed. And if it was not *spiritual* blessing that they received, what was it? If it was not grace, what else could it be? But of course it was grace. That He, who was "full of grace and truth," gave anything *less*, is inconceivable. And if so, what becomes of Professor Beet's sweeping assertion: "There is not one word in the New Testament which even suggests in the

St. Mark x. 16.

[1] Manual, pages 50, 51.

CHAP. XXIX.

slightest degree that spiritual blessings are or may be conveyed to an infant by a rite of which he is unconscious"? There is at least *this* word, St. Mark x. 16, and it does more than "suggest." It settles the question whether unconsciousness is a bar to spiritual gifts.

Mr. Beet objects almost as strongly to the idea that by baptism the unconscious infant is "brought into a new relation to GOD." But here it occurs to us to ask: "Was not the unconscious Jewish infant brought into a new relation to GOD by circumcision? Did not that rite make at least this cardinal change in his relation to GOD, that it brought him into the bond of the covenant?" Mr. Beet would be the first to admit it—in fact, he asserts it, and he furthermore insists on the analogy between baptism and circumcision. And yet he denies that baptism, a rite which he admits our LORD ordained as necessary to salvation, has or can have as much efficacy as circumcision. He is reduced, in fact, to holding that unconsciousness, which was no bar under the Law, is an effectual bar under the Gospel. But on what grounds? The CHRIST did not destroy law or prophets; He came to fulfil. The initial rite of the New Covenant can never be *less* gracious, less influential, than that of the Old. If the unconscious Jewish child might be, and the unconscious Christian child cannot be, brought into blessed covenant with GOD, then it follows that *children are worse off under the Gospel than under the Law.*

Gen. xvii. 10, 14.

Mr. Beet harps much upon the "unconsciousness" of the child. But—unless I mistake greatly—it is part of his belief that our children, in their profound "unconsciousness" and before they have done good or evil, are tainted with "original sin." Because of their descent from the first Adam, he pronounces them to be "by nature children of wrath." But does grace abound *less* than sin? Is it really the case that in the "covenant of grace" unconscious children are accounted sinners before GOD, whilst yet there is, and can be, no

Eph. ii. 3.

Rom. v. 20.

provision for uniting them to the second Adam, and so making them children of God? Are we, in fact, to believe that "unconsciousness" is an insuperable barrier to "spiritual blessings" but no barrier at all to spiritual taint and corruption? Is *this* "the gospel of the grace of GOD"?

But why, according to the Professor, does baptism bring regeneration to the believing adult and bring nothing to the innocent babe? It is because "the difference between the two rites [infant and adult baptism] is fundamental." According to him, there is an "absolute difference between a baptism which is a personal confession of faith and another baptism in which the baptized one does nothing whatever." But if so, then we have not "one baptism" in our religion, as St. Paul teaches, but two. How can they be one, if there is an "absolute difference" between them? The one is a means of grace, the other a barren sign. The language uniformly used in the Holy Scripture, that is to say, about the rite, is untrue, is dangerous and misleading, if it is understood of nine-tenths of the baptisms of Christendom. No, the Professor must either give up infant baptism, or take it with its consequences. And why does he deny the blessings of baptism in the case of infants? Because infants cannot *do something to merit them*—he says the infant "*does* nothing whatever;" because they are "obtained by faith." I respectfully commend to the learned and candid Professor and to my readers the catholic, the evangelical, and charitable view that *grace is absolutely free;* that neither repentance, nor faith, nor "personal confession of faith" can "obtain" it, and that nothing but impenitence, unbelief, or disobedience (of which infants are incapable) can hinder it.

Eph. iv. 5.

There are other objections to the Church's view alleged by Mr. Beet, as, *e.g.*, (1) that the term "sons of GOD" is restricted in Scripture to believers—a contention which has been already met by Mr. Sadler in his "Second Adam," chap. xiii.; (2) that she recognises

CHAP. XXIX.

the validity of baptisms performed by "a thoughtless or bad man"—to deny which (we think) comes perilously near the Roman view of *intention*, and must make every man (for who can read another's thoughts?) uncertain whether he has been "regenerated" or not, whether his sins are "washed away" or not; and (3) that it must lead us to Rome, because it raises "questions of ecclesiastical pedigree;" whereas the Church distinctly teaches that baptism by a lay person is just as valid (however irregular) as that ministered by a priest,[1] which cannot be fully discussed here. I must conclude by asking Nonconformists (1) to consider the Professor's startling admission—his belief in adult regeneration in baptism; (2) to observe the difficulties in which his denial of the grace of infant baptism lands him—difficulties, to my thinking, much greater than any which may attach to the teaching of the Church; and (3) to ask themselves whether this teaching, even if it is mistaken, constitutes a sufficient justification for their dissent from the Church of GOD in England? It cannot be said that it "subverts personal faith in Christ," or that it "overthrows any fundamental."[2] It is easy to speak of it as a "soul-destroying error," &c., but such rhetorical language will not bear examination. If this doctrine in any way dispensed with the necessity for repentance and faith (as it is popularly, but most erroneously supposed to do); if it taught that baptism could finally profit us, apart from personal religion, there might be some ground for renouncing the Church which holds it. But the Baptismal Office itself, the Catechism, the whole Prayer Book flatly

Acts xxii 16.

1 "*Fieri non debet, factum valet* is the Church's law. The truth is that it is CHRIST who baptizes. Mr. Beet says, "The power to distribute the gift of eternal life cannot be universal." But what Churchman has maintained that a priest has this power? And if baptism conveys this gift, then the power, according to the Church, *would* be universal, for lay baptism is valid. Besides, Mr. Beet's view of adult baptism "raises the question of ecclesiastical pedigree" as much (or as little) as the Church's doctrine of infant baptism.

2 See below, page 223.

contradicts this idea. The question, therefore, comes to this: Is it right to perpetuate a "schism in the body" because the Church teaches that Christ still blesses little children who are brought to Him, and that His blessing, so far from lessening their responsibility, increases it? Can Christians answer to the Lord of conscience if they, in our present humiliating and paralysing divisions, persist in frustrating our Master's importunate prayer for unity, all because the ancient Church of this land takes His and His apostles' words about baptism *to apply to all who are capable of baptism;* all because she tells her children that they have received grace, and at the same time entreats them that they "receive not the grace of God *in vain*"? (2 Cor. vi. 1).

Note. Whether Mr. Beet is consistent with himself or not, he is certainly, in this particular, in direct antagonism with the founder of his denomination. For in his sermon on "The New Birth" (No. xxi.), by which, unless I am greatly mistaken, Mr. Beet is himself bound, Mr. Wesley said: "A man may possibly be born of water, and yet not be born of the Spirit. There may sometimes be the outward sign where there is not the inward grace. *I do not now speak with regard to infants.* It is certain our church supposes that all who are baptized in their infancy are at the same time born again. . . . Nor is it an objection of any weight against this that we cannot understand how this work can be wrought in infants. For neither can we comprehend how it is wrought in a person of riper years." And in Sermon xviii. he says, speaking of infant baptism, "Who denies that ye were then *made children of God and heirs of the kingdom of heaven?*"—*Sermons*, 10th edition, pp. 210, 184. I do not think that Mr. Beet would attempt to reconcile these opinions with his own.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE SUPPER OF THE LORD—PART I.

"The Communion ought to be celebrated *at least* every Sunday."—*Calvin.*

"*C'est un grand mal que la communion soit célébrée si rarement dans notre église.*"—*A. Monod, Les Adieux.*

To the doctrine of the LORD'S Supper, as stated in the formularies of the Church of England, some Nonconformists have little or no objection. Till quite recently, the Church's Order of Administration was used in its integrity in all the chapels of the Wesleyan Methodists, and that same order abridged is used there still. Moreover, as is well known, many Nonconformist ministers have no scruple in receiving the Holy Communion at our hands, and complain if it is denied them; nor are they slow to recognise the thoroughly evangelical tone of this service. But there are others who think differently. Some quarrel with the very place we assign to this sacrament. They say we make altogether too much of it, and they think it full of danger to rank it higher than prayers or preachings. The very frequency of our Communions is a stumbling-block to them; a weekly—to say nothing of a daily—celebration must savour of formalism, and betray a superstitious regard for ordinances. And as unhappily there are some Churchmen who share these misgivings—I may mention Bishop Ryle and the late Dr. Boultbee as representatives of this class, for they both assert that the LORD'S Supper has a place in our pulpit-teaching which it has not in the New Testament—it becomes necessary, before we enter on

the question of doctrine, to combat this prejudice and to ask whether Churchmen, and especially clergymen, *do* make too much of Holy Communion.

For some 1500 years before CHRIST came, then, there was a true religion in the world; for the religion of the Jews was just as true in its time as Christianity is now. It was a Divine religion, one that came from GOD, one that led to GOD, no less than the holy religion which we profess. The GOD of truth ordained it—"we know that GOD spake by Moses"—and He knows no change.

Now, what was the cardinal rite, the prominent feature of this old religion? Everybody will admit that it was *the offering of sacrifice*. The central *idea* of that creed was the unity of GOD; the central *rite* was the rite of sacrifice. Every day of the year a sacrifice was offered, morning and evening; every Sabbath twice as many; the first day of every month ten more. Sometimes they were offered by thousands. At the dedication of the temple Solomon offered 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. Josiah offered over 3600 oxen and 37,000 sheep at one Passover, while at every Passover of later days a quarter of a million of lambs were slain!

Exod. xxix 38. Numb. xxviii. 9, 10. 1 Kings viii. 63. 2 Chron. xxxv. 7-9.

And this went on for the 1500 years from Moses to CHRIST, and sacrifice did not *begin* with Moses. Year after year, century after century, these thousands of victims were offered, in the desert, in Shiloh, in the Holy City. From the day the tabernacle was set up until the day that the temple was destroyed by Titus, without a day's intermission, except when the temple was burnt by the Chaldeans and when it was desecrated by Antiochus, the smoke of these continuous sacrifices ascended to the skies, the blood of these countless victims was poured at the foot of the altar.

Numb. vii. 1-3.

2 Kings xxv. 9. 1 Macc. i.

Now, what was the object of all this? What good did it do? It is worth remembering that the Jews themselves who offered these sacrifices did not know. The priests, even the high priest, were left in ignorance as to their real meaning. But they *must* have had an

CHAP. XXX.

object. GOD ordains nothing in vain, least of all the rites of His religion. What then was their import and efficacy?

It was not that they could take away sins. The Scripture distinctly says so. "It is not possible that
Heb. x. 4. the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins." The blood of a *beast* cannot make atonement for the sins of a *man!* No; these thousands of hecatombs, these rivers of blood, could not purge the conscience or wash away one spot of guilt. Why, then, we ask again, were they offered?

To this question but one sufficient answer can be given. They were pictures, pleadings, foreshadowings of the sacrifice of JESUS CHRIST. Offered to GOD, not to man, they reminded GOD of the one atoning Sacrifice, of Him who should "offer Himself," of the "Lamb of GOD that taketh away the sin of the world." Every sacrifice spoke of pain, of blood-shedding, of death. If men could not read their language aright, GOD could. To Him every dumb sheep, every guileless lamb, spoke of the agony, the blood, the death, which, in the fulness of time, should put away the world's guilt. To Him each of these in its turn cried aloud, "O Father, forgive; O Father, save; for see! Thy Son will offer Himself, the just for the unjust, to bring men to GOD." And all through those fifteen centuries, every morning, every evening, the same pleading voice, "Behold the Lamb of GOD," went up to heaven; every day the same moving picture, the same foreshadowing of the Crucifixion, was spread before the eyes of the Eternal.

And then the CHRIST, He of whom these things spake, and of whose Passion they were pictures, He came, and on the altar of the cross *His* blood was poured, *His* life was given. At one of the Passovers, whilst the emblems of His dying were still being offered, He, "the very Paschal Lamb," was sacrificed for us.

But mark what He did before He died! On the very night of His betrayal, while men were eating (or preparing) their Passover, He gave them, then and there,

a *new memorial, a fresh picture*, of His death. They had done what Moses commanded, done it for 1500 years, done it for a memorial. Henceforth, says our LORD, "Do this," break this bread, bless this cup, "for a memorial of Me."

And so it comes to pass that presently we hear of Jewish sacrifices no more. They have served their purpose. The substance being come, the shadow is no longer needed. "He taketh away the first that He may establish the second."

But from that day to this, more than 1500, more than 1800 years, scarce a day has passed on which the "Christian sacrifice"—so Richard Baxter, so John Wesley called it—*i.e.*, the commemoration, the re-presentation of Christ's sacrifice, has not been offered. The Apostles and first Christians "continued steadfastly in the breaking of bread." "Day by day" this sacred rite was celebrated in their homes. Every LORD'S day in their assemblies they showed the LORD'S death. Yes, the sacraments of Christianity have exceeded in number the sacrifices of Judaism.

Acts ii. 41
Ver. 46.
xx. 7.

And what if we do not "see the good" of this? What if we did not comprehend its object or meaning? Why then, we should be no worse off than the Jews were, than the high priest was. But we *do* understand its object —at least, in part. We know that it is a memorial, a showing, of the precious death. Not only does it remind us, it reminds GOD—and this is a matter of much greater importance—of the one availing Sacrifice. Bulls and goats showed CHRIST'S death until He came; the bread and wine show His death until He comes again. Those were pictures of One who *should* come: these of One who *has* come. Those were the shadows the Crucifixion cast before it: these the shadows it leaves behind it. Those were mute, powerful pleadings: so are these. "See, O Father," such is their cry, "see this broken bread: it tells of the body broken on the tree. See this red wine: it tells of the blood poured on the cross. 'Behold the Lamb of GOD.' For His sake forgive and bless and save us."

1 Cor. xi. 26.

CHAP. XXX.

Of course, the Blessed Sacrament is not *merely* a memorial; it is much more. Why, even the Jewish sacrifice was more: it was also a feast. In the case of the peace-offerings at least, the sacrifice was followed by a feast on the things sacrificed. The man brought his bullock, his sheep, and offered it to GOD. But when the fat was burned and the blood poured and his portion given to the priest, the rest of the carcass was given back to the worshipper and he and his feasted thereon. So is the Holy Communion a feast. We offer, like Melchisedek, bread and wine to GOD, and GOD accepts it, blesses it, and gives back to us the body and blood of CHRIST to be our spiritual food, the meat and drink of our souls. Do we not call it "the Lord's *Supper*"? But this is only an additional proof that the Christian sacrament has taken the place of the Jewish sacrifice—a proof that it occupies in the New Covenant the place of dignity and honour and excellence which burnt-offerings and peace-offerings occupied in the Old.

St. Matt. xxvi. 26; 1 Cor. x. 16. St. John vi. 54–58. 1 Cor. xi. 20.

And did any shadow of doubt remain as to this identification, as to the sacrament being the Christian analogue of the sacrifice, it would be dispelled at once by those words of our LORD (spoken at the institution of this rite), "This is My *blood of the New Covenant*," and those other words of His Apostle, "We have *an altar*," &c.

St. Matt. xxvi. 28. Heb. xiii. 10.

But does some one object here that this argument from the Old Testament, whatever force it may have, is but an inference, and is not like positive New Testament statement? Then let us remind him that for many years after the Holy Communion was instituted *no New Testament was in existence*. Those first communicants, that first generation of Christians, they had no Gospels or Epistles to guide them. Yet, day by day and year by year they regularly showed the LORD'S death. What then did they see in it? How did they understand it? Why, they could only interpret it, as we have just done, by the light of the Old Testament: they could only compare this institution with the institutions of Judaism.

We *cannot* shut out the light which that first and true religion throws upon this ordinance, for the first Christians had no other light to guide them. We cannot pretend that it rests exclusively upon Scripture statement, for the "blood of the New Covenant" anticipated by many years the books of the New Testament.

"But you cannot deny," somebody will say, "that the references to the Holy Communion in the New Testament are comparatively few—much fewer, for example, than in many of our pulpits." No doubt this is so, and it is precisely what we might expect. For when this New Testament was being written, the church (it must again be remembered) had been celebrating her Eucharists for many years. The Gospels, consequently, could not *ordain* this rite, the Epistles could not *institute* it—that had been done long ago. All we can expect them to do is to *recognise* it, to mention it incidentally, to guard and regulate it, which is just what they do.[1] We must remember, too, that the first Christians, to whom the Epistles were addressed, were unlike most of our congregations. *They* did not assemble, as we often do, for psalms and sermons, and then leave the church before the commemoration of CHRIST'S death. The commemoration of His death was what they met for. How can we expect, consequently, to find in those writings repeated injunctions to the observance of a rite which no Christian of those days dreamed of neglecting? or repeated assertions of its importance, when for many years it had been the one distinctive act of Christian worship? So that the very absence in the Epistles of all exhortations to communicate is itself a striking proof of the high estimation in which this sacrament was then held. If we found many of these, it would prove that some Christians then held the rite as cheap and unimportant as some Christians do now. But we find none.

Acts xx. 7.

But are the *notices* of the Holy Communion in the New Testament, are they really so few and unimportant?

[1] See note on p. 149.

CHAP. XXX.

Is it the case that its pages give but little prominence to the sacrament of peace and love? This question now demands a decisive answer.

The Gospels then tell us that our LORD CHRIST ordained as essential parts of His religion *two rites and no more.* He was not given to commanding ceremonies. His was a spiritual, not a ceremonial religion. But all the same, *two rites* He did ordain, and of these the Holy Communion was one. Does this look as if it were of secondary importance?

Moreover, the same Gospels also tell us *when* it was that He ordained this Holy Sacrament. It was on the night of His betrayal; it was on the eve of His death that He commanded the memorial of His death. He reserved that behest, *i.e.*, for the supreme moment of His ministry, when the twelve were gathered round Him for the last time, when He gave them His parting commands. Such was the place He assigned to this sacred rite, such the prominence He gave to it. Do we make more of it than He did?

Let us pass to the Acts of the Apostles. They will tell us what the primitive church thought of this office, what place the Apostles assigned to it. Well, they tell us that the first Christians joined in "the breaking of bread" every day, and that the special assemblies of the LORD'S day were for this purpose. They reveal to us no stated meetings of the early church except for the Holy Communion. Do we then exalt the rite higher than the early Christians did, or thrust it into a prominence which the Apostles denied it?

Acts ii. 42, 46.

Acts xx. 7.

Turn we now to the Epistles. True, it is only mentioned there by St. Paul, and only mentioned by him incidentally, because of the abuses which had grown up around it. But what does he say about it? He says it is to last till our LORD comes again, and further, that he received the account of its institution by special revelation. He says that our LORD did not leave him to derive his knowledge of the rite from St. Peter or St. James—no, he must hear it from the Master Him-

1 Cor. xi. 26.

cf. Gal. i.

self. "For *I received of the Lord* that which also I delivered unto you," &c. Such was our LORD's estimate of its importance. Do we appraise the Holy Supper more highly than he did? Do we make more of it than the man who had heard of it direct from heaven would do? 1 Cor. xi. 23.

Nor is the Apocalyse—the last book of revelation—without its lesson on this subject. For it tells us that the memorial, the picture, of the precious death which the church has exhibited now for over 1800 years has its counterpart, its antitype, in heaven. We show the pledges, the touching tokens of His body and blood. He shows the pierced and wounded body itself. Century after century He stands before the throne as "a lamb that had been slain." Do we "show the LORD's death"? So does the LORD Himself in the great temple of heaven. And hence we learn that our Eucharists are shadows, are earthly representations of the worship of the skies, and that while we plead the atoning death in these outer courts, our Great High Priest pleads it within the veil. Are we wrong then to insist on a worship which has its original and its blessed counterpart in heaven? Rev. v. 6.

But if this is so—and that it is so cannot be denied—why is there this jealousy of Holy Communion? why this fear lest we should make too much of it? It arises, as observed before,[1] out of a feeling which every Christian should respect—out of jealousy for the honour of our LORD; out of the fear lest we should put our trust in an ordinance instead of His atonement; lest, in short, we should plead our merits instead of our Saviour's. But this is precisely what no rightly instructed communicant can do. The *very rite* is a disclaimer of our merits, an exhibition of His, as the only ground of our hope. We do not, cannot, plead therein our repentance, our faith, our works, or our assurance; but His wounds, His death—nothing but His death, we present to GOD.

[1] Page 192.

CHAP. XXX.

"Look not on us"—so speaks this Blessed Sacrament—"but look on the Crucified. Look on the face of Thine Anointed. We will make mention of His righteousness, and His only. Behold the Lamb of GOD." How can we then put the Holy Communion in the place of CHRIST? How can it come between us and our HOLY LORD? I submit, therefore, that instead of our "making too much" of this Eucharistic feast, our Nonconformist brethren have made too little of it, to the hurt and loss of their souls.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE SUPPER OF THE LORD—PART II.

"I wish that men would more give themselves to meditate with silence what we have by the Sacrament, and less to dispute of the manner how."—*Hooker.*

THE objection to which this paper must be devoted is a much more formidable one. It is held by many Nonconformists that this sacrament is a *bare commemoration* of CHRIST'S death; that the bread and the wine are figures and emblems, and no more, and therefore that the English Church, in teaching that "the body of CHRIST is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper," though "only after an heavenly and spiritual manner,"[1] is misleading and imperilling the souls of men. They object, in fact, to our connecting "an inward and spiritual grace" —the grace of CHRIST'S real because spiritual presence— with the "outward and visible signs" of bread and wine. They do not allow that there is, in and through this Holy Sacrament, any "strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the body and blood of CHRIST, as our bodies are by the bread and wine."[2] In fact, the belief now prevalent amongst many Nonconformists on this subject is rank Zuinglianism, to the deep regret of some of their foremost men. "There can be little doubt," says Dr. R. W. Dale, "that modern Congregationalists, in their extreme dread of high sacramental doctrines, have drifted into pure Zuinglianism; it is possible that some of them have drifted farther still." They would

[1] Art. XXVIII. [2] Catechism.

CHAP. XXXI.

altogether repudiate the teaching of the Puritans, whom they claim as their spiritual ancestors, who in the "Savoy Declaration" of 1658 confessed that "worthy receivers outwardly partaking of the visible elements in this sacrament do then also inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporeally, but spiritually receive and feed upon CHRIST crucified." Equally would they regret the language of their master Calvin: "In His sacred feast, He bids me, under symbols of bread and wine, to take His body and blood, to eat and to drink." Dr. Maclaren, for example—and he has many followers—would make short work of such teaching; he insists strongly on the mere figurative view which makes it "a bare sign of a thing absent." Nay, the Westminster Confession of 1643 pronounces this sacrament to be "only a commemoration," and the Independent "Declaration of Faith, Church Order, and Discipline," &c., finds nothing more in this rite, no other reason for celebrating it, than "as a token of faith in the Saviour and of brotherly love." It becomes necessary, therefore, to show, first, that the sacramental language of the Church is abundantly justified, and more, is *required* if she is to echo the language of Scripture; and, secondly, that the ideas and language just cited, and which express the views of many Nonconformists, are entirely inadequate to convey the teaching of Holy Scripture on this mysterious subject.

But before we address ourselves to this task, before we compare Church teaching and Scripture teaching, some preliminary questions suggest themselves to the mind; and the first is this: Is it likely, is it conceivable, that our LORD CHRIST, GOD "manifest in the flesh," should devote the last moments of His earthly ministry to appointing a mere form—a form which, however significant, was void of all grace and efficacy? Was it worthy of Him so to do? Can we really believe that with desire He desired to eat that Passover with them simply to perpetuate the Jewish mode of teaching by types and emblems? Again, if the Holy Communion is

of such secondary importance; if its only design is to picture CHRIST's death to the mind's eye—a thing, by the way, which it does very imperfectly indeed—why should St. Paul receive the account of its institution, as he did, direct from heaven and from the LORD Himself? 1 Cor. xi. 23. Thirdly, is it credible that the Apostles, and the Christians of the Apostolic age, met weekly, if not daily, to remind themselves, by gazing on the sacred emblems, that the CHRIST of GOD had died for them? Why, they of all persons wanted no such reminders. Who that had seen Him hanging on the cross could ever forget the sight? Who could find in bread and wine a help to the memory? Indeed, if this was their object, they would have found the sacrifices of Judaism more helpful, more pictorial and touching and expressive, than the sacraments of Christianity. The death of a lamb in the temple precinct would reproduce the Crucifixion much more vividly than the breaking of bread in the upper room. Besides, if the elements of bread and wine are mere figures, mere reminders of the precious death, why are Christians commanded to "eat," to "drink"? Surely it would have been more to the purpose to have directed them to "look," to "gaze." Nay, we should gain a more vivid mental picture of CHRIST crucified if we had been commanded to "hear" a sermon or to "read" St. Matt. xxvii. or St. John xix. And lastly, if the ordinance is "only a commemoration"—no mystery, no means of grace at all, but only an object lesson—then why is such high and mysterious language used concerning it? Why, for example—to take a single instance—is the unworthy receiver said to be "guilty of the body and blood of the LORD"? But this brings us 1 Cor. xi. 27. to our brief comparison of the language of Holy Writ and Holy Church on this question.

Does any Nonconformist take offence then at our calling the consecrated elements the "body" and "blood" of CHRIST? I have known people to resent it extremely. But will they tell us what else we can do, if we are to be loyal to our LORD and His teaching? For He it was

CHAP. XXXI.

who said "This is My body," "This is My blood of the New Covenant." Is it objected that we ought to call the bread a *figure* of His body and the wine a *picture* of His blood? Our answer is that we call it exactly what He called it, and neither more nor less. Yes, it is constantly happening: Churchmen are constantly blamed, because they will not *water down the language of Scripture* to suit men's ideas of what is right and proper. They are constantly wanting us, both the Roman and the Puritan, to read something *into* Scripture which is not there. They are not content to leave the Eucharist a mystery as they find it. The one says it is a miracle; the other says it is a figure. But perhaps the offence lies rather in our Church's language about *partaking* of the body of CHRIST, &c. (Art. XXVIII.). But here again we only use the very words which St. Paul has used before (see 1 Cor. x. 16, Revised Version and Margin). Or do men go back and renounce our communion because we speak of "eating CHRIST'S flesh," &c.? Surely they forget that the words they quarrel with are CHRIST'S —not ours, and that in murmuring at them they are actually doing over again what the Jews did. The question "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" has been asked before. The history of unbelief is always repeating itself. Or is it objected to our Office that it teaches that the faithful communicant is made "one with CHRIST and CHRIST with him"? But what is this but the echo of our LORD'S own words, and of St. Paul's, that we are members of the one body because partakers of the one bread. And so we might proceed to show that *every* single statement of the English Church, in Catechism, Office, or Article, about the Supper of the LORD has its exact counterpart and its warrant in the language of Scripture. I appeal to my Nonconformist brethren to "search and look" whether this is not so. I put it to them that it is impossible to quarrel with the Church on her Eucharistic doctrine without at the same time quarrelling with that Bible which they so much revere.

St. John vi. Ver. 52.

Ver. 56.

1 Cor. x. 17.

But—I must say this in conclusion—just as every phrase in the Prayer Book about the Supper of the LORD can be paralleled and justified out of Holy Scripture, so *no* parallel, *no* warrant can be alleged for regarding it as "only a commemoration" or as "a token of faith in the Saviour," &c. These are definitions, not of the Sacrament as it is, but as, in the opinion of men, *it ought to be.* What a miserable idea of the "communion of the body of CHRIST," as St. Paul calls it, to see in it only a means of exhibiting our paltry faith and love! Why must we be always thinking of ourselves; always forgetting that GOD comes before man; always be the victims of a selfish individualism? No, it is not the Church, but dissentients from the Church that have strayed from the "old paths" of Holy Writ, and have overthrown the nature of the Sacraments.

[1] The Independent "Declaration of Faith," &c., "Principles of Religion," xviii. All Independents, however, are not of this way of thinking. I quote with great satisfaction some words of Dr. Dale, written in 1867: "The ceremony is not a mere artificial aid to memory . . . it is intended to convey, and does actually convey, more than words can express. . . . The bread is the body of CHRIST; and no familiarity with theological speculation is required to suggest to the mind of every communicant that our LORD intended to connect the higher life, which He originates and sustains, with His humanity."—*Evang. Magazine*, 1867, pp. 302–304 (quoted by Sadler in *Aids to Faith*).

CHAPTER XXXII.

CONFIRMATION—PART I.:—ITS AUTHORITY.

"What is held by the universal church, and is not ordained by councils, but has always been retained in the church, this is most rightly believed to be handed down with apostolic authority."—*St. Augustine.*

THERE are thousands of Christians in this country who honestly think that they are doing GOD service by opposing and ridiculing the rite of Confirmation. To them it is all so much formalism and superstition. They cannot understand why the Church clings to it and makes so much of it. Some of them suppose it to be a relic of Popery, and many firmly believe that the cause of true religion would be "well rid of it." Perhaps they have been prejudiced against it (as they well might be) by the conduct of some confirmed people. Perhaps the grave *abuses* of Confirmation in past days have blinded them to its *uses*. Anyhow, it has never occurred to them that in resisting it they were actually "resisting the ordinance of GOD" and are therefore "fighting against GOD." If *the truth* is gently and kindly put before them, perhaps they will never oppose it again, and instead of cursing it, will "bless it altogether."

To such persons, whether Churchmen or Nonconformists, the following facts—facts which cannot be questioned or denied—are submitted by one who once thought much as they do now, in the hope that they will weigh them and test them, calmly, honestly, and prayerfully. To the writer, and to many more,

they seem to furnish an absolute *demonstration* of these two propositions:—

1. *That the rite of the "laying on of hands" is of Divine appointment: it is "from heaven," and not "of men."*

2. *That the renewal of the baptismal vow, though not of Divine appointment, is nevertheless "good and profitable unto men."*

But this very division of the subject makes it necessary to explain that the rite of Confirmation, as it is now administered in the Church of England, consists of two *distinct and separate ordinances*—ordinances which only within the last four hundred years have been joined together, and which any day might be put asunder—namely, (1) the "confirmation" or renewal by those who have been baptized of their baptismal promise, and (2) the "confirming" or strengthening of such persons by the grace of GOD, through prayer and the imposition of hands. Of the *first* part, the promise, we have to prove that, though not expressly commanded in Holy Scripture, it is sanctioned, and indeed suggested, by the Word of GOD, and is in any case a helpful and salutary ordinance. Of the *second*—the laying on of hands—we have to show that it was ordained of GOD and is recognised as a fundamental ordinance of Christianity in Holy Writ.

I propose, however, to take the second part of Confirmation—the Divine part—first, because this is the essential part, and because, curiously enough, the first or *human* part provokes no opposition. That—the vow and promise made in the church—is now pretty generally recognised as a wise and salutary provision; so much so, that not a few Nonconformists have wished that they had something similar amongst themselves. But with the second part it is quite otherwise. Though the "laying on of hands" is found over and over again in Holy Scripture, and though it was practised both by our LORD and His Apostles, nothing is too bad to say of it—at least in certain quarters. Here, then, the brunt

CHAP. XXXII.

of the battle lies, and we shall do well to encounter it at once.

I begin by remarking that this rite *exists at the present day;* that it exists—whether rightly or wrongly I do not say, but it exists—among *all sorts of Christians,* Romans, Nestorians, Anglicans, Lutherans, Zuinglians, &c., all of whom, widely as they may differ in other respects, are agreed here; that it is administered *in almost all lands,* and not in England or Europe alone; and, lastly, that it is practised in the "Reformed" no less than the "unreformed" communions; among the Protestants of Sweden, Denmark, and Germany, and amongst the Calvinists of France and Switzerland, no less than amongst Catholics. The rite then exists, and all over Christendom.[1] Now comes the question: "How do we account for this? Who began it? When was it first started in the church?" Was it last year or last century? Was it at the Reformation, or was it in the "dark ages," 500 or 1500 years ago? Was it invented by some designing Pope or crafty Patriarch? You would think it was from the way it is often spoken of. If it were a recent ritualistic innovation it could not be more fiercely denounced. But it is not. No; the Reformers, the Patriarchs, the Popes, whatever their deeds, good or bad, did not begin Confirmation. Each of these *simply continued* a custom existing before his time.[2] They merely *handed on to us what had been handed down to them.* As we have *inherited* it, so had they. All you can blame the Reformers or the Fathers for is this—that they did not *discontinue* it; that they did not dare to *drop* a rite which had descended to them.[3] They purged it of sundry accretions—that

[1] In the Eastern Church, except amongst the Nestorians, *chrism,* or anointing, has unfortunately overshadowed Confirmation.

[2] A long list of testimonies to "the laying on of hands" in successive centuries of the church may be found in the Rev. W. Jackson's "History of Confirmation." See especially pp. 49–65.

[3] That this was the idea of the Reformers appears clearly from the "Necessary Doctrine and Erudition for any Chrysten Men," which appeared in 1545.

was all. This is bare fact — fact which cannot be denied.

When then was it started? The first recorded instance was in the year of our Lord 37. The Apostles began it; St. Peter and St. John started it. In Acts viii. 15–17 we find them doing precisely what our Bishops are so much blamed and ridiculed for doing now. They *prayed* for those who had been baptized; "prayed for them that they might *receive the Holy Ghost.*" Then they "laid their hands upon them, and they received the HOLY GHOST." A little later, in Acts xix. 5, 6, we find St. Paul doing the same thing, and with the same result. This was the beginning of Confirmation. And from that day to this it has continued, so far as we can trace, without intermission, century after century, without a break, down to the present time. If, therefore, the great church of CHRIST, if the millions of Christians of past ages and of the present day are altogether mistaken in maintaining and ministering this rite, they may at least plead that they are following the example of CHRIST'S Apostles; that they have only continued what the Apostles themselves commenced. It may be contended that it is wrong for us to do what Apostles did, but that they *did* this cannot be denied. You have Bibles. Search and look. Is this a fact or not?

Yes, and it is a fact that in this "laying on of hands" the Apostles only followed in the steps of others who had gone before them; they followed the example of Jacob, of Moses—Moses, who did this by Divine command—and, above all, the example of our LORD and MASTER. For not only did He, the Incarnate Son of GOD, lay His hands over and over again upon the sick (Luke iv. 40, "He laid His hands upon *every one of them*"), to *heal* them, but He also laid His hands on the children to *bless* them. What wonder that the Apostles should use a rite which they had received of the LORD JESUS. They thought perhaps they could not do wrong in following their Divine Master; we think we cannot do wrong in following them.

Gen. xlviii. 14. Deut. xxxiv. 9. Numb. xxvii. 18. St. Mark vi. 5; vii. 32; viii. 23. 25. St. Luke xiii. 13. St. Matt. ix. 18. St. Mark x. 16.

CHAP. XXXII.

We see, then, that the Apostles in laying hands on the baptized at Samaria and elsewhere only followed an ancient usage; they adapted it, *i.e.*, to a Christian purpose; but can we discover what made them do this, what led them to employ the laying on of hands for this new and different purpose? Did they act on their own responsibility, and was it their own idea? That is altogether inconceivable. It is inconceivable that the Spirit of Truth, which was promised to the Apostles as their sure guide, was withheld from them when, without a moment's hesitation, they began confirming. No; either their LORD must Himself have given directions respecting this ordinance during the "great forty days" which He devoted to "speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of GOD," which is extremely probable—He certainly did speak of laying hands on the sick, and we know that there are "many other things which JESUS did" which are not recorded—or the HOLY GHOST must have moved them to act as they did—one or the other. But in either case the thing was of Divine appointment, "from heaven," and not "of men." In either case, the Apostles only did what they were taught of GOD to do. This too is undeniable.

Acts viii. xix.

Acts i. 3. St. Mark xvi. 18. St. John xxi. 25.

And that this rite is of Divine appointment may also be undeniably inferred from the language in which Holy Writ refers to it. True, it is nowhere *commanded*, in so many words, in the New Testament, but then it hardly could be, seeing that it had *been in use in the church for years before a page of the New Testament was penned.* It would be rather late in the day for St. Paul, who wrote from A.D. 54 to A.D. 64, to ordain or enjoin Confirmation, seeing that it was already practised in the year A.D. 37. It had been ordained already by the Apostles; all we can expect to find, consequently, is a casual, or shall we say *providential*, recognition of it in their writings, or in the history of the early church. And this is just what we do find. Acts viii. 17 and xix. 6 have been already quoted, but it remains for us to notice Heb. vi. 1, 2. Here the sacred writer gives us, quite

incidentally, a list of the "first principles" or "foundation" of Christian teaching. He mentions "repentance," "faith," "baptism," &c.—things which we are all agreed to call fundamentals—and he also mentions the "laying on of hands."[1] The laying on of hands, that is to say, was then taught and practised amongst Christians, and so generally, so universally, as to be accounted a principle, a fundamental. But is it in the power of man, yes, even of Apostles, to appoint fundamentals? Is it conceivable that GOD has delegated to any human brain to decide what shall and what shall not constitute the "foundation" of CHRIST'S religion? Nay; "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid." If the laying on of hands *is* a "principle," as Holy Writ declares, then it must of necessity be "from heaven," and not "of men." Is it not so? Will any one maintain the contrary?

But here it may possibly be said, "No one denies or can deny these facts, or some of the conclusions which are drawn from them. The Apostles did undoubtedly lay hands on the baptized. But this is no warrant for your rite of Confirmation, and for this reason, that they laid hands on men for the purpose of conveying the *miraculous gifts* of the Holy Ghost—such as prophecy, miracles, &c.—and these miraculous gifts we find they did convey, through this laying on of hands. But these gifts have long since ceased in the church—no one pretends to convey them now—and therefore the laying on of hands should have ceased also. The fallacy in your argument lies here, that Confirmation was instituted by the Apostles for one purpose, and that it is now administered for a totally different purpose. The mistake of the Church has been that she has continued a rite which long ages ago lost its *raison d'être* and its efficacy." We will examine this objection in the next chapter.

Acts viii. 18; xix. 6

[1] "Here is imposition of hands reckoned as part of the foundation and a principle of Christianity in St. Paul's Catechism."—Jeremy Taylor (*in Jackson*).

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CONFIRMATION—PART II.:—ITS RATIONALE.

"Our means to obtain the graces which GOD doth bestow are our prayers. Our prayers to that intent are available as well for others as for ourselves. To pray for others is to *bless* them for whom we pray, because prayer procureth the blessing of GOD upon them."—*Hooker.*

DID the Apostles, who undoubtedly ministered the rite of "Confirmation, or the laying on of hands," minister it merely to convey certain miraculous *gifts*, such as tongues, prophecy, &c., which were peculiar to that age, or did they lay hands on the baptized for the purpose of conveying the *graces* of the HOLY GHOST, "love, joy, peace," &c., which are common to every age? This is the first question to be considered, and I submit that a thoroughly impartial mind can have no doubt as to which is the correct answer; for observe:—

Gal. v. 22.

1. It is distinctly stated that the Apostles "prayed for the HOLY GHOST," and that those confirmed "received the HOLY GHOST." We have no warrant for identifying the HOLY GHOST—which is GOD Himself—with mere signs, and tokens, and effects of His presence, and to do so in any other texts would make endless confusion.

Acts viii. 15. Ver. 17. Acts xix. 6.

2. The descent of the HOLY GHOST in that age was *always attended* by these outward and visible signs. At our LORD'S baptism the Spirit descended as a dove; at Pentecost tongues were seen and heard; they were heard again in the house of Cornelius, and in the assemblies of the early church. And we know why. They were signs to the unbelieving. A spirit cannot be heard or

Acts x. 46. 1 Cor. xii. 10; xiv.

seen; but for these signs how could men know that the Spirit was given at all? These things proved, and were meant to prove, a supernatural presence. 1 Cor. xiv. 22.

3. Preaching (or "prophesying") and prayers in that age were accompanied with supernatural manifestations. They are followed by such manifestations no longer. But no one argues that for this reason preaching and praying should cease. Why, then, should the "laying on of hands" cease? 1 Cor. xiv.

4. Every Christian admits—for this we are expressly taught—that the miraculous gifts were temporary and comparatively trivial, and that the graces are essential and eternal. And yet we are asked to believe that this apostolic ordinance was only for the former, the unimportant, and that the latter, the essential thing, must be excluded from this "operation" of the Spirit. 1 Cor. xiii.

5. If the laying on of hands in the apostolic age was only to convey miraculous gifts, then, obviously, this rite should have ceased when the gifts ceased. *But it did not.* It was continued; it has been continued ever since. The inference is unmistakable; it was for another and a higher purpose. If it was not, then the early Christians, one and all, made a fatal blunder. They saw for themselves that the "gifts" had ceased, and yet, in spite of this, they persisted in ministering the rite.[1] And, still more strange, this huge mistake has been perpetuated ever since, and the "whole silly church of CHRIST for the space of these sixteen hundred years" (Hooker) has been grossly deceived and deceiving.

6. The laying on of hands is mentioned among things which are of eternal obligation, such as repentance, faith, &c. Of the six "principles," that is to say, five are admittedly to last to the end of the world; can we believe that the sixth was a mere temporary rite for a Heb. vi. 1, 2.

[1] "The HOLY GHOST being to continue for ever, and the promise being of universal concernment, this way also of its communication . . . is also *perpetuum ministerium*, to be succeeded to and to abide for ever."—Jeremy Taylor (*in Jackson*).

CHAP. XXXIII.

temporary purpose?[1] And this when the sacred writer mentions all six in the same breath, and puts all on the same level. All belong to the "foundation." Can that foundation consist of five solid stones and one scrap of stucco?

See Note, p. 230.

7. The laying on of hands is still retained by most bodies of Christians as the outward sign of *ordination*, of appointment to the ministry of the Church. But every Christian is in one sense a priest, and has some sacrifices to offer. Why may not the Church *retain* this rite—we have not invented or begun it—if for no better reason, in the belief that it marks the ordination to the priesthood of all Christians? If it is not silly or superstitious in the former case, what makes it so in the latter?

Rom. xii. 1. Heb. xiii. 15.

I submit therefore—this objection being disposed of—that the laying on of hands, as ministered throughout Christendom at the present day, is proved to be the lineal descendant of the laying on of hands as ministered by the Apostles. And I submit further that it is no less a means of grace now than in the first ages of the Church; that the HOLY GHOST given then is given still, *in answer to prayer, to hearts prepared* to receive Him.

I ask attention to the words in italics, for Nonconformists are chiefly prejudiced against the high place here claimed for Confirmation by overlooking two important considerations: first, that prayer—prayer for the HOLY SPIRIT—is an essential part of the rite; *as* essential, to say the least, as the imposition of hands. It formed part of the apostolic rite; it has a prominent place in the ordinance still. And prayer for the HOLY GHOST, our LORD Himself has taught us, can never be unheard or disregarded. To Churchmen it is simply astonishing that any Christians can be found who can

St. Luke xi. 13.

[1] "Dare any Christian presume to say that the Apostle, the great and wise master-builder of the church, mistook the foundation whereon he built? or dare any one presumptuous soul single out this article from the rest as merely temporary, when all the rest are granted to be of eternal use?"—Bishop Hall (*in Jackson*).

CHAP. XXXIII.

believe that the solemn and public prayers of bishop and clergy, of congregation and candidates, all asking with one consent for the best of all GOD's gifts, can be useless. Has prayer then lost its former power? A Confirmation is or should be a solemn public prayer-meeting for GOD's blessing on the confirmees. Secondly, that Confirmation is no charm. Like the grace of the sacraments,[1] it only profits the penitent and believing. GOD never forces His grace upon us. We take from Confirmation according to the heart and mind we take to it. It leaves its mark even on the impenitent; it seals a blessing on those, and only those, who satisfy the evangelical conditions of repentance and faith. There is no legerdemain, no *opus operatum* here.

St. Matt. xviii 19.

But now let us turn to the *first part* of Confirmation —the renewal of the baptismal vow. It is not pretended that *this* is of Divine appointment; it is only claimed for it that it is a helpful and salutary thing and in no wise alien to the teaching of Scripture. We say that our LORD left His Church the power to decree rites and ceremonies—no society can exist without some power to make bye-laws—and that the Church has wisely ordained this part of the rite for the profit of her children.

St. Matt. xviii. 17, 18.

Let us admit at the outset that Holy Scripture says nothing of a baptismal promise made by god-parents on behalf of unconscious babes; nothing of "sponsors" or "sureties." But what of that? If no promise of any kind is *made* in baptism, as is the case in some Christian communities, nevertheless it is and it must be *understood*. In the nature of things baptism involves at least a tacit promise on the part of the baptized, because it is the seal and sign of the Christian covenant. Just as circumcision admitted to the Old Covenant, so does baptism into the New. On this point, I believe, most thoughtful Christians are agreed. But a covenant involves conditions, undertakings, expressed or understood. There can be no such thing as a covenant, a contract,

[1] See Chapter xxiv., p. 16*f*

CHAP. XXXIII.

without them. Where is the *contract* if all the promises are on one side only? So that if it is lawful to admit our children by baptism into covenant with GOD—and if it is not, then Christian children are worse off under the gospel than Jewish children were under the law—if it is right to baptize children, then it is right that they should undertake to fulfil the conditions of that covenant of which baptism is the monument and seal. And if so, what better, or indeed what other, plan can the Church adopt than this of sponsors or sureties? If a *temporal* benefit were at stake, who would hesitate for a moment? The thing is done and constantly done in the case of apprentices and others. Is it only when GOD is concerned that we may dispense with this security—with this solemn recognition and acknowledgment of the obligations which rest on the baptized. The obligations are there, whether they are recognised or not.

And if they are there, whether acknowledged or not, what can be more fitting than that our children, when they come to years of discretion, should in the most solemn way possible be put in mind of their responsibilities, be told of the covenant made in their behalf, and be asked whether they will confirm it or not? Even if they had no sponsors and made no promises, the Church would owe this to them; nay, she would be a cruel stepmother if she did not tell these "children of the covenant" of their privileges and obligations. In that case, the Christian society would do less for its sons and daughters than Judaism did; for we know that the Jewish boy at twelve years of age became *Ben torah*, "a son of the law," and was initiated into the duties of his position. Yes, and we know that our CHRIST, by His example, expressly sanctioned such initiation. Not, however, that we need Scripture warrant (though we have it) for such an obvious dictate of common-sense. If it is admitted that baptism is the seal of a covenant, or even if it is barely admitted that it involves some responsibilities, what further justification do we need for

Acts iii. 25.

Comp. Exod. xii. 26; Deut. vi. 20.

St. Luke ii. 42.

catching eagerly at every opportunity of bringing this home to the children of the Church, of inducing them to recognise and confess it? Who shall blame us because we are anxious to enlist them on the LORD'S side? Knowing that "confession with the mouth" is no less necessary to salvation than belief in the heart; Rom. x. 9. knowing that the "putting away of the filth of the flesh" does not save, but the "answer of a good conscience towards GOD;" knowing that it is an excellent 1 Pet. iii. and Christian thing to "witness a good confession 21. before many witnesses"—who can wonder that we 1 Tim. vi safeguard infant baptism with sponsors and vows, or 12. that we value so highly this part of Confirmation in which those baptized as children, when they arrive at years of discretion, renew the solemn promise of their baptism, ratifying and confirming it with their own lips in the presence of GOD and the Church? But perhaps we may spare ourselves further argument on this score, for everywhere, we are told, amongst Nonconformists the need is now admitted of some such service as this. Indeed, only inveterate prejudice could be blind to the splendid opportunities which the rite of Confirmation affords—quite apart from any grace which it may or may not bring—of impressing the truths of our religion on the minds of our children. No; the Church need make no apology for her tenacious continuance, year after year, and century after century, of an ordinance so "full of all blessed conditions" as this. If our Nonconformist brethren only knew the blessing it has been to thousands, and the potency of blessing that it has for all, they would claim it as a part of their heritage for ever. "Let them not take it in evil part, the thing is true; their small regard hereunto hath done harm in the Church of GOD."[1]

But what if, after all, Confirmation is *not* the Scriptural and apostolic rite which Christendom has so long believed it to be? Still, can any one honestly think or

[1] Hooker, V. lxvi. 8.

CHAP. XXXIII.

say that it is so irrational, so unscriptural, as to compel him to make a schism in the body? Does it "evert the fundamentals"? Does it "subvert personal faith in CHRIST"?[1] And if not, then why should it be allowed to set Christian against Christian any longer?

[1] See p. 353.

Note. "Can we suppose that the apostolic writer of this Epistle would represent the laying on of hands as among the fundamentals of Christianity if it were not a holy ordinance and had not a Divine promise annexed to it."—Delitzsch on Heb. vi. 2.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ABSOLUTION—PART I.:—THE COMMON-SENSE VIEW.

"Heaven is given unto me freely and for nothing."—*Luther.*
"God works by means, and the chief means is man."—*Bossuet.*

The three forms of *Absolution* found in the offices of the English Church, and especially that in the form for "the Visitation of the Sick" are sometimes alleged as reasons why Evangelical Protestants are in conscience bound to stand aloof from her communion. It is broadly hinted—it was to the writer of these papers when feeling his way from sectarianism to Catholicity [1]—that to join in her fellowship so long as the Prayer Book is not purged from these forms involves complicity in unscriptural error. To many a pious Nonconformist it seems to be a piece of priestly arrogance for the minister of Christ to pronounce any absolution at all. They think that the pardon of sin is a matter exclusively between the soul and its God—a matter in which no man has any right or title to interfere. They say that what the penitent wants is to hear the voice of God Himself, the witness, that is to say, of the Holy Spirit, assuring him of forgiveness, and that no human utterance can usurp the

[1] Mr. J. Guinness Rogers has recently defined sectarianism thus: "If I call my church a church and all the other churches sects, that is the sectarian spirit." I submit to him that, if the Bible is to be our guide, sectarianism consists in speaking of "my church" at all; *i.e.*, in claiming for my little society the name which belongs to Christ's universal society. He spoke of "My church," and we must use the word as He used it.

CHAP. XXXIV.

place of that voice without danger—the danger of healing the hurt of sin lightly, of crying peace when there is no peace, of making the straight gate broader than the gospel makes it, of begetting a false security, of leading souls to look to man instead of GOD for the remission of sins. It becomes necessary therefore for us to consider—and I do earnestly entreat my Nonconformist brethren to do us the bare justice of considering—whether the Church's teaching on this subject is or is not in conflict with the faith of the gospel; whether it is or is not a part of the Christianity preached by CHRIST and His Apostles. I shall submit to them that in these sentences of absolution there is nothing dangerous, nothing superstitious, and that without them some portions of Holy Scripture would be a dead letter, and the Church would consequently be unfaithful to her trust.

But let us, in the first place, as on former occasions, see how far we are already agreed; let us set down those fundamental principles as to the forgiveness of sins which Nonconformists, or the great bulk of them, hold no less than ourselves. We are thoroughly agreed, I take it—

1. *That only God can forgive sins.* We all allow that the Pharisees were perfectly right in asking, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" It is true that we cannot cite many texts to prove this, but that is only because revelation does not undertake to teach us what is plain and obvious without it—what common-sense teaches by itself. And it is surely sufficiently plain and obvious that sin being *an offence against GOD*, only GOD can forgive it. A man can only forgive a wrong or injury committed against himself. He cannot even forgive an injury committed against another man; much less then can he absolve from sin committed against Eternal GOD. It would be ridiculous, therefore, it would be against all reason, for priest or Pope to claim a power which must obviously belong to GOD alone. If the Prayer Book *does* make this claim for any ministers, it makes it in defiance of all common-sense. But does it make any

St. Mark ii. 7; Luke v. 21.

such claim? Were the Reformers or the Fathers so entirely devoid of reason as to assert it? We shall see presently that they were not. We are also agreed

2. *That even God cannot forgive all sins.* He cannot, for example, notwithstanding His omnipotence, forgive the sins of the impenitent. We say "cannot," because He cannot do wrong, and it would be wicked in GOD to remit the sins of men who mean to sin again. That would be to offer a positive encouragement to sin, a crime of which the Just and Holy One, by His very nature, is incapable. It is commonly supposed—of course it is a vulgar error—that Romish priests at any rate claim the power to forgive sins at pleasure. But that is a power which even GOD does not possess. One objection against ministerial absolution rests on the supposition that the priest assumes authority to forgive the wicked and unrepentant. But no priest in his senses is likely to think that he can do what GOD Almighty cannot do. Again, we are agreed

3. *That God can only forgive those who truly repent and unfeignedly believe.* The conditions of pardon—inexorable conditions laid down by GOD Himself—are these two, repentance and faith. Nor are these arbitrary or fanciful demands; they are securely founded upon right and equity; they spring out of the eternal fitness of things. A man must obviously believe that there is a GOD, and a GOD who is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, a GOD too who is merciful and pitying, before he will come and ask for forgiveness. He must also be sorry for past offences and earnestly intend to sin no more before he can without mockery ask for any pardon. Faith and repentance, consequently, are dispositions of mind which cannot in any case be dispensed with. No "absolution" can dispense with them. The conditions, that is to say, on which absolution, by whomsoever pronounced, can alone be availing, if it ever avails anything, are the very conditions which all Christians recognise as necessary to pardon and salvation. If man is invested with any authority to

CHAP. XXXIV.

pronounce or convey GOD'S sentence of pardon, he can only convey it to those whom GOD engages to pardon. No sentence of the Church or its officers can possibly set aside or go behind the principles laid down by GOD Himself. No one can be admitted through the door of Pardon who has not passed through that of Penitence.[1] So that we are further agreed

4. *That all that man can possibly do is to declare and convey God's forgiveness to those who fulfil God's conditions of forgiveness.* If A injures B, C cannot forgive him—only the person injured can do that—but C can, if commissioned so to do, take a message of forgiveness from B; he can assure A of pardon as B's accredited messenger. This is what the power of "remitting" and "retaining" sins amounts to. The Apostles could not forgive sins at their discretion any more than we can—GOD has not put our sins at the mercy of any man—all they could do, as all we can do, is to carry GOD'S message, to pronounce His sentences, to convey His pardons. Men do not "*give* pardon to the sinner any more than the physician *gives* health to the sick or the judge *gives* release to the accused, but they *apply* the *means* appointed and given by GOD for its attainment, and GOD blesses the means, and He works by them."[2] Finally, we are agreed

5. *That God works by means; that He uses a ministry in His dealings with souls and their sins.* No Christian—not even the Friend—believes that the Holy Spirit has undertaken the work of preaching the Gospel, of conveying messages of mercy or of warning, of laying down the terms and conditions of forgiveness, of explaining the plan of salvation. It is allowed that all this, by GOD'S own appointment, must be done by men. It has been already remarked[3] that if "nothing is to come between the soul and GOD;" if GOD does indeed engage to communicate by a direct revelation (for this

[1] Bp. Wordsworth, *Theophilus Anglicanus*, p. 116.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 113.
[3] Page 168.

CHAP. XXXIV.

is what it comes to) with each individual; if He anywhere undertakes to convince, teach, comfort, and, in one word, to "reconcile" men to Himself *immediately*, by the secret voice and working of the Spirit in the heart, then there is no place left for Bibles, churches, ministers, or sacraments. But the Christians to whom this EIRENICON is addressed recognise these things, this ministry, these means of grace, as parts of the Divine plan. They hold that by the instrumentality of men, men must be evangelised, taught, edified, comforted. They do not allow that even the message of conviction is, as a rule, conveyed directly. They look to texts, to sermons, to conversations to be the instruments of a godly sorrow. Even those who insist that the message of pardon must be direct and immediate—from GOD Himself, without human intervention—acknowledge that *in everything else* means and agents must be employed. The only point, therefore, on which we differ—for we are agreed, let me say in passing, that GOD "is not tied to means" (though we are tied to the use of them), and can dispense with absolution if He pleases—the only point at issue is whether "the ministry of reconciliation" includes any delegated power of pronouncing and conveying pardon; whether the commission to "preach the Gospel to the poor" carries with it any authority to "proclaim deliverance to the captives;" whether, in short, the ambassadors of CHRIST may set forth the promises and conditions of forgiveness, but may *not* declare the forgiveness, there and then, of all who fulfil these conditions. This is the one point in dispute between us. We all agree that they may and they must threaten men with the penalties of disobedience; that they may and they must declare who and who alone can hope for the mercy of GOD; that they may and they must proclaim who and who alone can have remission and forgiveness. But here we part company, for those who object to our absolutions say that ministers may not and must not go one step farther, and as GOD'S messengers, speaking in CHRIST'S stead, authorita-

2 Cor. v. 20.

CHAP. XXXIV.

tively pronounce those forgiven whom GOD promises to forgive. They hold, in fact, that the ambassador of CHRIST is armed with no authority to proclaim formally a full and complete amnesty to each and all such rebels as have laid down their weapons; that he has no sign and seal of forgiveness (other than that of baptism) for souls whom GOD has already forgiven, but who cannot forgive themselves. But we of the Church think otherwise; we think that without this authority the ministry of reconciliation would be incomplete, and for reasons of Holy Scripture which shall be given in our next chapter.

Acts ii. 38.

CHAPTER XXXV.

ABSOLUTION—PART II.:—THE TEACHING OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

"Let no man deceive himself. God alone can show mercy. He alone can grant pardon for the sins which have been committed against Himself, Who bare our sins, Who sorrowed for us, Whom God delivered for our sins."—*St. Cyprian.*

We have seen that common-sense, apart from all revelation, teaches these elementary truths: (1) That only God can, really and truly, forgive sins. (2) That even God can only forgive the penitent and believing. (3) That man, whilst he cannot forgive, can, if commissioned so to do, carry a message, an assurance, and a sentence of forgiveness. (4) That man can only carry a sentence of forgiveness to those whom God, in His secret counsel, has already forgiven. These are almost axioms in theology, axioms as to which all Christians are happily agreed.

But now let us proceed to ask what Holy Scripture, that other and greater light given us by God, says on this same subject of "absolution or the remission of sins."

1. The Old Testament is allowed to be a foreshadowing of the New. It teaches by type and in outline what the latter proclaims in substance and reality. In the Old Testament, then, the priest under the Law was directly commissioned to declare who were and who were not lepers. It was an essential part of his office, after careful examination, to "pronounce" certain persons "clean," and certain others "unclean." It was altogether out

Col. ii. 17. Heb. x. 1.

CHAP. XXXV.

of his power to make any leper clean who was not clean —that was the act and prerogative of GOD—all he could do was to pronounce those clean who were clean. Those who fulfilled the conditions prescribed by GOD, and who, therefore, were clean already in the sight of GOD, though not in their own sight or the sight of the congregation, he could pronounce these clean, and no others. "He is clean," we read in ver. 37, "and the priest shall pronounce him clean." The sentence did not alter the leper's state before GOD; it was for the information and comfort of the man himself and of the congregation of Israel.

Lev. xiii. 6, 8, 11, 17, 23, &c. Comp. St. Matt. viii. 4. 2 Kings v. 7.

Now leprosy, and all the manifold rites and ordinances connected therewith, are allowed to be shadows, types, of sin and the forgiveness of sin. Only thus can the position which this disease occupied under the law and the singular provisions made respecting it be explained —that it was selected to be a standing type and object-lesson from generation to generation of the plague and scourge of sin. Like everything which caused ceremonial uncleanness, it represented in that age of shadows the pollution and separation of the sinner. And even if this were not so, still the ceremonial, being of Divine appointment and based on eternal principles, must have its lessons for us. And the ritual of leprosy represents *inter alia* the legal priest as unmistakably invested with a "power of the keys," a power of "remitting" and "retaining." Whether priestly absolution is a function of the Gospel may be open to doubt—at any rate it is doubted—but no one can deny that the Levitical priest was intrusted with the duty and privilege of pronouncing an absolution in the case of the leper, and only through his absolving voice, and subsequent ministerial acts, could these outcasts be restored to society and have the assurance that they were free from that plague. Powerless as he was to cure the disease; powerless as he was to remit or retain, except on the lines and conditions laid down by GOD; still, according as he remitted or retained on these lines, was the leper

Lev. xiv.

accounted clean or unclean. So that a ministry of absolution is undeniably contained in the Mosaic code; from which it follows that if there is no provision for any similar exercise of absolution under the Gospel, then the legal outline has never been filled up; then the shadow had a promise of good things to come which has no substantial counterpart; then the dispensation of works is more merciful than the economy of grace, for the former had what the latter, on this supposition, has not—a public and authoritative assurance on the part of GOD's representative of restoration to the favour of GOD.

But it is not only by type and shadow that the doctrine of absolution is taught in the Old Testament; we have an instance of its exercise, and one that covers and justifies the absolutions of the later church, in 2 Sam. xii. 13. For no sooner had David cried with deep penitence, "I have sinned against the LORD," than Nathan forthwith replied, "The LORD also *hath put away thy sin*." But if the Old Testament prophet might speak thus without blasphemy, why not New Testament presbyter? Is the older covenant *richer* in its assurances of pardon than the newer and better? Heb. viii. 6. It may be said, though it cannot be proved, that this absolution was pronounced at GOD's express bidding. Well, it admits of no doubt that evangelical absolutions are pronounced by Divine command,[1] and in any case St. John xx. 23. the *principle* of absolution—GOD's message of pardon to the penitent *through* prophet or priest—is clearly enunciated here.

2. Our Saviour JESUS CHRIST claimed authority to forgive sins, not as GOD, but as man. His answer to the Pharisees who objected "Who can forgive sins but GOD only?" was a miracle to show that the "*Son of man* hath power *on earth* to forgive sins."[2] Not only GOD

[1] See Hooker, VI. vi. 2.

[2] It is worthy of notice that it was always what may be termed the "High Church doctrine" of our LORD that brought upon Him the charge of blasphemy. St. Matt. ix. 4; St. John vi., x. 33, &c.

CHAP. XXXV.

in heaven, but man upon earth. But what is this power or "authority" (Revised Version, margin) which the Son of man possessed? Even as GOD, He could have no power, as we have already seen, to forgive the impenitent. Even our great High Priest could not pronounce the soul clean which all the while was unclean. Not even GOD manifest in the flesh could alter or abate the eternal conditions of pardon, and the Son of man could not, as such, remit sins against GOD. We see in His action, consequently, the first exercise of evangelical absolution. A priest "taken from among men," He is ordained for men in things pertaining to GOD, not only to offer gifts and sacrifices for sin, but also to pronounce absolution to the penitent, to "preach deliverance to the captives," to say to them that are of a fearful heart "Be strong, fear not," to say to the contrite "Thy sins are forgiven thee," to say to the believing "Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace." It is difficult to see what other authority He could exercise *as man* than to convey the pardon of GOD to those who were capable of pardon; and that this was the act of His humanity we have further testimony, for "the people," we read, "glorified GOD which had *given such authority unto men.*"

3. The authority which our LORD derived from the Father to remit or retain sins, that authority He delegated or transmitted to His Apostles. "As the Father hath sent Me," He said, "*even so send I you.*" It is instructive to notice the occasion on which these and the following words, "Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them," &c., were spoken. It was a night to be much remembered. Like the night in which He was betrayed, this, the evening of the day of His resurrection, marks an epoch in His ministry. It is His first appearance in His risen life to the eleven, and He signalises the occasion by forthwith giving them their commission, by providing for the continuance of His work. But what is this mysterious power with which He invests them? It cannot be (1) a *discretionary*

St. John xx. 21.

power of forgiving sins; a power of dispensing with repentance and faith—that, as we have seen, is a power which even He did not possess, a power which righteousness denies even to omnipotence. Nor can it be (2) a power of reading the hearts of men and of thus discerning their penitence before pronouncing absolution. There is no evidence that the Apostles were gifted with any such insight. We never read that *they* "knew what was in man." "Knowing their thoughts" *is* predicated of our Blessed LORD, but never of His Apostles. So far as we can see, they had to judge, like other men, from appearances, from what met the eye, and with this their own language in Acts i. 24 agrees. It has been supposed that St. Peter detected by supernatural insight the fraud of Ananias, but the narrative does not justify this conclusion; he may have been privately informed of the circumstances of the sale. He has to *ask* Sapphira before he is sure of her guilt. And even if it were otherwise, this case, so critical at that stage of the Church's history, may well have been exceptional. It was certainly exceptional in its punishment. So with Simon Magus. It was his offering money to obtain the gift of GOD, and not any inspiration or intuition, convinced the Apostle that Simon's "heart was not right before GOD." Later on we find this same St. Peter "dissembling," whilst another Apostle is "carried away with their dissimulation." Does this look like spiritual insight? And St. Paul denounced them all, not because he could read their hearts, but because he "saw that they *walked* not uprightly." St. Paul, it is true, "saw that the impotent man at Lystra" had faith to be made whole, but it was because he had "fastened his eyes upon him," and read it in his face. And though some in the early church had the gift of "discerning of spirits," yet all are directed to "try the spirits," and tests are suggested for proving them. We cannot see in *this* "power of the keys," therefore, any gift of supernatural illumination in order to enable the Apostles to remit or retain sin. Nor (3) can the words refer, as

Acts v. 3.

Ver. 8.

Acts viii. 18–23. Gal. ii. 13.

Acts xiv. 9.

1 Cor. xii. 10. 1 John iv. 1, 2.

CHAP. XXXV.

perhaps the commission of St. Matt. xvi. 19 and xviii. 18 does, among other things, to the removal or confirmation of ecclesiastical censures—certainly not to this primarily or exclusively—for the "remission of sins" in Scripture never means less than justification does. Nor, finally, can it import a mere commission to preach repentance and remission of sins in CHRIST's name. "Whosesoever *sins ye remit*" must assuredly point to something more than mere stating the conditions of forgiveness, which any Christian may do. We are driven to the conclusion, consequently, that the authority here bestowed is the authority which the Son of man exercised as man, the only power of remitting or retaining which man *can* enjoy; authority to pronounce, declare, and convey *God's* pardon of sins to those who are fit for pardon; the power which is shadowed forth in the absolutions pronounced by the Levitical priests; authority as an ambassador to deliver a message of forgiveness from Him who alone can forgive to those alone whom He wills to forgive, and indeed, has already forgiven.

St. Luke xxiv. 47.

But perhaps it will be objected that, even if this was the power which the Apostles enjoyed, it was a power peculiar to their high office, and one which died with them. But why should we think this? The remission of *sins* cannot be peculiar to any one century. The provision needed to certify the penitent of the first days of his reconciliation is needed not one whit less now. Why should we conclude that GOD has denied to the church of to-day a function, a consolation as necessary as ever it was? GOD and His grace, man and his needs, the soul and its sins, the devil and his snares, the strait gate and the narrow way, all are unchanged. And yet we are to believe that the means of grace are reduced in number, that the comfort of absolution perished with the Apostles: that "the ministry of reconciliation" is shorn of its distinctive feature!

4. The minister of CHRIST in pronouncing absolution only does what the member of CHRIST does in minister-

ing baptism. No man can baptize himself. The "one baptism for the remission of sins" must be administered by another. But the one who ministers baptism, though himself powerless to forgive sin, does thereby convey GOD'S forgiveness to those who are qualified for forgiveness, and to no other. Baptism is, in fact, a form of absolution,[1] and the objections alleged against absolution lie equally against baptism. It is said, for example, that absolution can certify no one, because its benefit is contingent on repentance and faith? But the benefit of baptism is equally contingent on repentance and faith. Is it held, again, that forgiveness is a thing altogether between the soul and GOD, a matter in which no voice of man can interpose? But in that case there would be as little room for any act or ministry of man; as little place for the absolving rite of baptism. And yet the "one baptism for the remission of sins" is of GOD'S appointment.

Acts ii. 38.

In fact, the difficulties which have been felt respecting absolution will disappear if it is remembered that the "ministry of reconciliation" is an integral part of the Gospel; that that ministry can only carry, not invent, messages from GOD to man; and that it would be an indifferent "reconciliation" if it stopped short of proclaiming full, free, and immediate pardon to all who are not disqualified for pardon.

[1] Baptism was sometimes called *indulgentia* or absolution. See Bingham, i. 473.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

ABSOLUTION—PART III.:—THE FORMS OF ABSOLUTION.

"The priest is like a civil judge, who does not sit on the judicial tribunal to *make* laws, but to *administer* them. He does not pronounce sentence of forgiveness in his own name or on his own authority, but in the name of God . . . and upon the conditions of repentance and faith prescribed by Christ."—*Bishop Chris. Wordsworth.*

It is possible that I have not carried some Nonconformists—and some Churchmen—with me in the view of Absolution taken in the two preceding chapters, or at any rate in the last. But if such should be the case, that is no reason, let me hasten to say, why they should dissent from the English Church, which is in no way committed to this or that private opinion. If the ground I have taken up were proved to be absolutely untenable, it would still be a question whether the *language of the Church herself* is so unreasonable or so unscriptural as to make dissent a conscientious duty. And this is the question which we have now to consider:—Is there anything superstitious, anything dangerous or unevangelical, in the three forms of absolution found in the Anglican Prayer Book?

And here I submit, in view of what was advanced in the first paper, that if these absolutions have ever in any way ministered to superstition; if they have ever whispered "peace when there was no peace," it could only be in defiance of all the teachings of common-sense. If men have ever credited the priest with a *discretionary*

power of forgiveness; if they have vainly imagined that his authoritative sentence could dispense with repentance or faith—and it is possible they have—then they have only themselves to blame for it; they have much less excuse than in other cases. It is no valid argument against *any* doctrine that it has been abused or misunderstood, or even that it is liable to be abused and misunderstood, for there is no doctrine of our religion of which this cannot be said; not one which cannot be and has not been more or less perverted. What is the faith of the Holy Trinity in the popular mind but a doctrine of Tritheism? How long was it widely believed —and the belief is not extinct even now—that our LORD's death was required to appease and disarm the Father's wrath? No one again denies that there is a doctrine of election in Scripture, but as little can they deny that the true doctrine has been, and is liable to be, perverted into fatalism and antinomianism. So again with the peculiarly Protestant doctrine of justification by faith; it has led some to suppose that faith is meritorious, and has led others to contemn and decry good works. The true faith of a Christian, in fact, always lies between a Scylla and a Charybdis, and nothing is easier than to be an unintentional heretic. But if the doctrine of absolution has been misconceived and twisted, there is really no excuse for it, for this can only be done in defiance alike of our reason and of revelation, both of which safeguard it by those obvious limitations which are stated in our first chapter and illustrated in the second.

But we must now turn to the forms of absolution found in the Prayer Book, and first to that in the Offices for Morning and Evening Prayer—though I am not certain that any defence of this formula is really required. I do not know that the sturdiest evangelical can here find anything to quarrel with. For it owes its place in the service (with the rest of the "Penitential opening") to the most Protestant of the revisions, that of 1552, and to the suggestion of Peter Martyr and

CHAP. XXXVI.

Bucer—foreign divines who were more advanced in the Protestant direction than our English Reformers of the same period. They at least cannot have seen any harm in an absolution which they inspired, and that Calvin approved of absolution in the abstract is well known. And this formula, for anything that appears on the face of it, is simply declaratory. It speaks unequivocally of GOD as the only source of grace and pardon—"HE pardoneth and absolveth;" of the priest as a mere channel and mouthpiece, only empowered and commanded to "*declare and pronounce* the absolution and remission of sins;" and lastly, of this message of present pardon as only for "*people being penitent*," only for "them that truly repent and unfeignedly believe His holy gospel." Surely there is nothing here that smacks of formalism or superstition. The only point at which men can cavil is the restriction of this message to the lips of the presbyters of the church. It may be alleged that it is a message which any Christian is authorised to deliver; that no man, lay or cleric, can be wrong in proclaiming that "He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent," &c. But even allowing, for the sake of argument, that this is so, still it will be conceded that that does not make it right for any and every man to proclaim this *in the great congregation*. If the conditions of pardon are to be proclaimed at all in the assemblies of the church, then some one must be somehow deputed to this office, if only to prevent confusion. And if the church thinks fit to restrict this solemn function to her presbyters, who is to blame her for it? It can surely be no valid objection to this public proclamation of pardon that every care is taken that it should be pronounced in the most solemn and orderly way—by the "ambassadors for Christ" alone, to whom is committed the "ministry of reconciliation;" by those officers of the church whose proper province is the ministry of the Word, and not by those who were primarily appointed to "serve tables."

2 Cor. v. 20. Vers. 18, 19. Acts vi. 4.

But even still less is the absolution in the Com-

munion Office open to reproach. For this is not even declaratory; it is precatory. It is declaratory indeed of the conditions, the absolute and unvarying conditions of forgiveness ("to all them that with *hearty repentance and true faith turn* unto Him"), and it declares that the exercise of mercy belongs to GOD alone ("Who hath promised forgiveness of sins," &c.), but as for the rest, it is a prayer: "Almighty GOD . . . have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you," &c. Surely the presbyter of CHRIST may pray this in the congregation of CHRIST without offence. No, the difficulty lies, not in either of these absolutions, but in that contained in the office for the visitation of the sick. It may be well, therefore, to set forth this, and the rubric which precedes it, at length:

CHAP. XXXVI

"*Here shall the sick person be moved to make a special confession of his sins, if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter. After which confession, the priest shall absolve him* (*if he humbly and heartily desire it*), *after this sort:* OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, who hath left power to His Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in Him, of His great mercy forgive thee thine offences. And by His authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

Now this no doubt appears at first sight to be strong if not unwarrantable language. But it is amply vindicated by the following considerations:—

1. It is to be used in *exceptional cases only*—in the case of a sick man who has been *examined* as to his repentance (see a preceding rubric), whose conscience has been burdened by some secret sin, which sin he has at last confessed, and for which he humbly and heartily desires the assurance of Divine forgiveness. It is to be used, that is to say, only when the minister has every reason to believe that he has a genuine penitent before him; only when this penitent has acknowledged his sin, and only when with humility and sincerity he has asked for the ministry of reconciliation.

CHAP. XXXVI.

2. Its use is restricted to cases in which we have express assurance *that God will and does forgive.* This man has "confessed" his sin, therefore GOD is "faithful and just to forgive him his sins, and to cleanse him from all unrighteousness." He calls on the name of the LORD, therefore he "shall be saved." He has "repented and turned again," therefore his "sins shall be blotted out."

1 John i. 9. Rom. x. 13. Acts. iii. 19.

3. Exceptional cases may require exceptional treatment. "The last and sometimes hardest to be satisfied by repentance are our own minds."[1] Here is a man who cannot forgive himself, whose conscience is so burdened by sin that he hardly dares to hope for mercy. The ministry of reconciliation must have a special and direct message for him if it is to assure him at all. The absolution indicated in St. John xx. 23 must not be denied him.

4. The formula of itself distinctly limits the benefits of absolution *to those who repent and believe.* It speaks of "power . . . to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in Him." How then can it whisper peace (to this or that sick man) when there is no peace, seeing that it expressly warns him that pardon is only for the penitent. Nor can this or that man fondly imagine that pardon proceeds from the priest, or that he can dispense it as he will, for the very first words of the absolution deny this. Moreover, the priest especially prays (as in the Communion Office) to a Higher Power for forgiveness: "Our LORD JESUS CHRIST . . . forgive thee thine offences."

5. But what, it will be asked, do you say of these words: "By His authority committed to me, I absolve thee"? Why, this, that they can only mean: "I absolve thee so far as He has given me authority to absolve thee, and no farther." The priest cannot give what he has not received; CHRIST'S authority empowers him to pronounce those clean who are clean, and no

[1] Hooker, VI. vi. 14.

other. It authorises him to convey the assurance of forgiveness to those who satisfy GOD'S conditions of forgiveness, and no other. CHRIST Himself, as we have seen, had no power to forgive the unrepentant; still less then can He have delegated such power unto others. He can give no authority to do wrong.

6. This absolution must be taken along with the teaching of the Church elsewhere[1]—in the other absolutions, for example, and in the collects. There is hardly a text of Scripture but requires to be compared and balanced with other Scriptures. The teaching of the Prayer Book here must, in all fairness, be interpreted by its teaching elsewhere. And how rich and evangelical is that teaching! Why should we think that the Church did not know her own mind; that she contradicts here what she affirms over and over again elsewhere? Is it not our interpretation that is at fault—not the Church's language? Which is the more likely of the two?

I submit, therefore, to my Nonconformist brethren in CHRIST that these absolutions afford them no sufficient warrant for standing aloof from the Church, from the "one body" into which they are baptized; no justification for forming private societies, and then forthwith calling them churches, or for perpetuating our present miserable divisions—divisions which bid fair, by their petty strifes and jealousies, to make men detest the Christian name, and to bring our divided house about our ears.

[1] A correspondent reminds me that the *rest of this very office* excludes the idea that this absolution is more than ministerial. For the priest is directed, after pronouncing the absolution, to pray GOD, who "puts away the sins of those who truly repent," to "impute not unto" the sick man "his former sins," &c. Then follows Ps. lxxi., which is one long appeal to GOD'S mercy, and this in turn is followed by a cry to CHRIST to save and help him; and finally, the penitent is plainly told that "there is none other name" through whom he may receive "health and salvation, but that of our LORD JESUS CHRIST." What Dissenter could desire more?

Part III.

OF THE RITES AND OFFICES OF THE CHURCH

CHAPTER XXXVII.

LITURGICAL FORMS.

"The public prayers of the people of GOD in churches thoroughly settled did never use to be voluntary dictates proceeding from any man's extemporal wit."—*Hooker.*

FROM the DOCTRINES held and taught by the English portion of the universal church, which we have for some time past been endeavouring to explain, we pass to a consideration of her RITUAL and manner of service. We have now to ask whether the way in which she worships GOD is of such a character as to justify those who would do the will of GOD in repudiating her worship and fellowship. And first of all we have to deal with her use of LITURGICAL FORMS. Can we rightly belong to a church whose ministers "pray from a book" and who are pledged at their ordination "to use the form in the said book prescribed and none other"?

And this question, which happily is much simplified by the fact that many of the more cultured Nonconformists have already answered it for themselves (by deliberately adopting a liturgy), it is the more necessary to consider because, to the uninstructed mass, both of Churchmen and Dissenters, this use of a form of prayer is the one *obvious* distinction between Church and Chapel. About their respective *doctrines* they know very little, but no one can fail to see that at Church we use a prayer-book, and at Chapel, as a rule, they use none. To many, therefore, this practically represents the difference between Church and Nonconformity, and for one Dissenter who holds aloof from us on account of this or that

dogma there are perhaps ten whose objection rests on our use of forms. For *their* sakes, consequently, it is necessary to consider whether such forms of prayer can be justified, though the more intelligent Nonconformist, as above remarked, has already answered this question in the affirmative.

But, first, it must be clearly understood that we are here speaking of *public* prayers—of prayers *in the Church*—and of these alone. In the closet, the cottage, the mission hall, we are just as free as the Nonconformist to use what devotions we please. Great as is our veneration for the Prayer Book, no Churchman would contend that it was either designed or adapted for evangelistic work—it is a manual for the use of the faithful—and we need not and do not use it in mission services. There we can, if we will, dispense with forms. Nay, it is a question whether, provided matins and evensong are duly said, extempore prayers are not lawful in the Church. At any rate they are just as lawful as the hymns (I do not here include the anthem) which are now so freely and profitably introduced into our services. But the question we are considering is, not whether *extempore* prayer is permissible in the Church, but whether anything else can be tolerated; whether, in short, any forms can rightly find a place in the public worship of the new covenant. We of the Church say "Yes," and we say "Yes" for the following conclusive reasons:

1. *There are no Christians who do not use forms of worship—of one kind or other—in their services.* For all Christians, even those who most deride the use of forms, who compare them to "crutches," &c., use *hymns*. I say "*all* Christians," for I understand that hymns are now sometimes heard in the meeting-houses of the Friends. Yet what are these hymns but forms—forms of *praise*—precomposed and printed forms? Now, if it be right to use these—and Christians with one consent have decided that it is—why is it wrong to use forms of *prayer?* The former are addressed to the Creator no less than the

CHAP. XXXVII.

latter. Nay, these hymns as often as not contain prayers —some of them are prayers, nothing but prayers, from beginning to end. On what principle then can it be contended that it is right and Christian to sing precomposed hymns, and yet wrong and formal to use precomposed prayers? In each the soul speaks, or should speak to GOD. Is it the poetry or the music makes all the difference? It may be said indeed that we could not have singing without them, but what does this mean? Why, that we *must* use some forms in the worship of Almighty GOD; that we cannot, do what we will, get on without them. We see then that all Christians use forms of devotion; yes, and use *forms of prayer* in their psalms and hymns. The very persons, that is to say, who denounce all forms of prayer use them themselves without knowing it. But

See Note I, p. 256.

2. *The Founder of Christianity used forms of prayer.* Our LORD listened to such forms and joined in them when He went "as His custom was into the synagogue" every sabbath day. He also joined in the *Great Hallel.* This is beyond dispute. The liturgical forms which the Jews had then, and which they use still, go back to an early date. They have eighteen collects which they say were composed by Ezra himself. Anyhow, they were used, sabbath by sabbath, in those synagogues of Judæa and Galilee where our Blessed LORD worshipped. And He did not denounce them, did not call them "crutches," did not set them down as unspiritual. Forms of prayer, therefore, *cannot* be wrong in themselves, because our LORD has sanctioned them and shared in them. Moreover

St. Luke iv. 16. St. Matt. xxvi. 30.

3. *He gave His disciples a form of prayer; He prescribed one for their use.* The LORD'S Prayer, no doubt, was meant for a model and pattern, but it was also meant for a form. "When ye pray, say, Our Father." It was to be said by His disciples, just as the form which John had given was repeated by his disciples. And this one fact is decisive. It settles the question. Forms of supplication *must* be lawful, must be good;

St. Matt. vi. 9 St. Luke xi. 2.

they cannot possibly be wrong, unevangelical, un-Christian, for CHRIST Himself composed and prescribed one. If they are wrong, then the LORD's Prayer is wrong, and those who object to the one must, if they are consistent, object to the other.

Now, our LORD, the Light of the world, having used liturgical forms, and having Himself appointed one such form for use, it seems almost impertinent to set down any further reasons. Still, it is right that the whole evidence should be placed before the reader. We remark, therefore, that for this custom of the English Church the following *additional* reasons may be alleged:

4. *The Apostles and first Christians used forms of prayer.* Not only were they "daily in the temple;" not only did they go up thither at the hours of prayer, but "they continued steadfastly *in . . . the prayers*" (chap. ii. 42, Revised Version). They continued, in fact, the prayers of the synagogue, and out of these the ordinary services of the Church have grown. Matins and evensong are no invention of modern days; they trace their ancestry to those synagogue services in which our CHRIST took a part. There are traces of Common Prayer in the New Testament; as, for example, in Acts iv. 24; 2 Tim. i. 13; ii. 11, 12. Such "common prayers" are mentioned by writers of the second century. The liturgies of very early days have come down to us. It is to be remembered, therefore, that Churchmen have not *begun* the use of fixed forms; they have only *continued* what they have inherited, and what they have received was fashioned "after the pattern showed on the mount;" it had its origin in the worship of the heavenly choir. Again:

Acts iii. 1.

Rev. xv. 3, 4.

5. *It is inconceivable that the early church used only extemporaneous prayers.* It is not denied that such prayers *were* used—by the "prophets;" whilst they and the miraculous gifts on which their "prophesyings" depended, lasted.[1] But they cannot have been the

1 Cor. xiv.

[1] So we gather from the *Didache*.

CHAP. XXXVII.

invariable rule, for if they were, then when did the use of precomposed forms arise? What is the date of this innovation? There would assuredly be distinct traces of their introduction. Such a startling change would have left its mark in church history, in the shape of protests and opposition. But there is no mark, nor trace of mark. Forms of prayer, on the contrary, appear everywhere as of familiar use, in the churches of Asia, of Europe, and of Africa, and all Christians acquiesced in them. And not only so, but—

6. *It is undeniable that forms of prayer have prevailed in the church throughout the first fifteen hundred years of our religion.* It is the extempore prayer is the novelty. Those who use a prayer book—as the vast majority of Christians do—only keep to the old paths, and refuse new fashions in religion. No argument for public extemporaneous worship is found in the ancient Christian writings. So far as we have any record, after the age of miracles, the churches everywhere, down to the time of the Puritans, had their liturgies. Again:

7. *Precomposed and studied prayers agree better with the majesty of God and the weakness and ignorance of men.* GOD is a great king. The shining seraphim veil their faces in His presence. We are cautioned against offering Him "the sacrifice of fools," because He is in heaven and we are on earth. Yet how often is He addressed, in extempore prayer, as if He were "a man in the next street," with a familiarity which men would not use to their employers? Who that knows anything of prayer meetings or the humbler types of Nonconformist worship—indeed, I cannot except either Dr. Parker or Mr. Spurgeon from the charge—has not been shocked by the unintentional profanity of some prayers, and pained by the turgidity and pretentiousness of others?[1] Jewish writers tell us that their

Isa. vi. 2.

Eccles. v. 1.

[1] "It was a time when fresh forms of speech had not found their way into the northern [Presbyterian] pulpit, and when language *twice dead and withered* made the staple of extempore supplication."—*British Weekly*, June 1, 1888.

liturgies were suggested by the fear lest the worship of GOD should be degraded through the ignorance or infirmity of men, and that Ezra composed his eighteen collects in order that the prayers of the poor and unlearned might be as finished and acceptable as those of the scribe. It is necessary to add that

8. *The seemingly extempore prayers of Nonconformist pulpits are often precomposed.* It is well known that many eminent ministers think, and sometimes write, out their prayers as carefully as their sermons. And who can blame them for it? How can it be a reproach to any man that he carefully considers what are his and his people's wants, and puts them before GOD in fitting and studied words? Can he not "pray in the HOLY GHOST" then, as well as at the moment they are uttered? Why should he be "rash with his mouth to utter anything before GOD"? But if *written* forms are permissible, why not *printed* forms? And if the words of *one* man, why not the carefully chosen words of the wisest and best of men? Finally—

9. *Forms need not be formal.* Otherwise, what becomes of the Psalms, some of which, like Pss. li., lxx., lxxxviii., cxxxix., are nothing but prayers; what of the other set prayers of the Old Testament, such as, *e.g.*, are found in Deut. xxi. 7, 8; xxvi. 5–10, 13–15; Numb. vi. 24–26; x. 35–36; Joel ii. 17. Some of these were *commanded* by GOD Himself, others were inspired by Him. Can He have sanctioned what was necessarily formal? Nay, what becomes of the LORD'S Prayer itself, and of that other LORD'S prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner"? Must *they* be mere formalities? But it is needless to argue this further, for a moment's reflection will show that men can, if they will, put their heart into any reasonable prayer, even if it happens to have been printed. But perhaps it is objected that *Nonconformists do not feel at home in the forms of the Church.* Very likely! "Custom is king of men," and "man is a bundle of habits." The long use of extemporaneous prayer becomes a second

CHAP. XXXVII.

nature, and it would be surprising if men could accustom themselves to so great a change all at once. Churchmen feel just as strange and out of their element when they hear the prayers of the chapel. They are just as positive that nothing could ever reconcile them to the change. They will perhaps tell you that "no man having tasted old wine straightway desireth new, for he saith, The old is better."

I submit then to Nonconforming Churchmen, that the Church's use of liturgical forms, so far from justifying dissent, furnishes one valid reason for abandoning that attitude. We are often asked, "Why do Churchmen use them"? whereas the proper question to ask is, "Why do not *all Christians* use them"? For us, it is enough to answer: "We have no such custom, neither the churches of GOD." But why *they* should abandon the use of the Jewish Church, of the Apostles, of the early church, of well nigh universal Christendom for fifteen centuries, it may not be so easy to say.

1 Cor. xi. 16.

Note 1. Mr. Spurgeon having protested against the introduction of a Liturgical service into Sunday-schools, a writer in the *British Weekly* (January 10, 1890) forthwith points out that Mr. Spurgeon has "compiled a liturgy himself for use in his own congregation . . . and it is in constant use at nearly every service in the Tabernacle. . . . This liturgy comprises prayers of the most direct kind; personal appeals to a personal Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; devout supplications for saving and sanctifying grace; intercessions for every Christian organisation, &c. . . . The Church cannot do without a liturgy, and never has. If our hymn-books were deprived of their 'ready-made prayers' they would present a sorry blank."

Note 2. "I once heard Mr. Spurgeon utter a prayer which some of us dare not have uttered. Mr. Gough was lecturing in the Tabernacle. I was on the platform, and some of us would have prayed for Mr. Gough in such terms as these: 'Do Thou bless our dear friend, now venerable in years, who has come from a distant but sister country, whose institutions we commend to Thee and to Thy blessing, and who is here to night, radiant and useful, to do us all good!' Mr. Spurgeon simply put out his arm and said, 'Lord, bless our friend Gough!'"—Rev. Dr. Parker in *British Weekly*. The same paper (September 20, 1890) quotes with approval a prayer offered at the City Temple (with reference to the Dockers' Strike), "which was at once a vindication of the right of the churches to interfere and a strong expression of sympathy with the oppressed!" Are prayers then addressed to the congregation?

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

MORNING AND EVENING PRAYER.

"I reverence the Liturgy next to the Bible."—*Dr. Adam Clarke.*
"The ritual of England breathes a Divine calm . . . the prayers are devout, humble, fervent."—*Carlyle.*

Having vindicated in our last chapter the use of *Liturgical forms*, as such, in the public worship of the Christian congregation, we have now to consider briefly the particular forms in use in the English portion of the universal church. And here we shall deal with certain objections frequently alleged, and more frequently felt, against the order for *Morning and Evening Prayer.*

But it may be well to remind ourselves, in the first place, that no liturgy is, or can be, without a blemish; none perfect and incapable of improvement. Being of human composition, it must necessarily bear the impress of human imperfection. No Churchman pretends that the Prayer Book is inspired, and few Churchmen of the present day, I imagine, do not feel that it greatly needs enrichment, if not revision. A manual adapted to the wants of the sixteenth century can hardly satisfy the needs, hardly suit the changed conditions and the vigorous and growing life of the nineteenth. But such defects as these—defects which are inherent in every composition of the kind—are no sufficient excuse for Nonconformity. If I am to dissent from the Church because its form of Divine service is not, in my opinion, faultless, then I can never belong to a "church" at all, for *extempore* prayers, no less than all liturgies, are very, very far from being perfect; nay, they are more likely to be charged

CHAP. XXXVIII.

with error, just because they *are* extempore, than a carefully studied and precomposed service. If I find in any liturgy what appears to me to be impropriety, or untruth; if, remembering my own fallibility, and having taken counsel with those who are wiser than myself, I am still convinced that this phrase or that prayer is irreverent or unscriptural, then, no doubt, I cannot conscientiously use that phrase or join in that prayer, but that does not debar me from using and profiting by the rest of the liturgy; still less does it justify me in creating a "schism in the body," in breaking away from that part of His church in which it has pleased God to place me. Even a blasphemous prayer—such, for example, as a petition to the Blessed Virgin or St. Michael, to use the prerogatives of GOD—whilst it might debar me from publicly joining in the service in which it occurred (because by so doing I might seem to join in the blasphemy), would not warrant my starting or joining a new "church" —that is to say, a new society of Christians which *claimed* to be a "church." It would warrant and indeed require me to labour for the reform of that liturgy, or perhaps for the substitution of a new office in its place, but it would not justify me in running two bodies in the place of the "one body," in rending the seamless robe of Christ. And no one, so far as I know, pretends that the English Liturgy contains any such blasphemy. Nothing worse than imperfections, such, for example, as repetition, formality, frigidity, are alleged against it. These may be strong reasons indeed for altering or enriching these formularies, but they furnish no reason whatever for utterly repudiating the national Church which has inherited them and which uses them.

And what are the objections, let us now ask, which are most frequently entertained against the daily offices of the English Church. So far as I know, they are these: 1. The constant repetition of the same forms. 2. The frequent occurrence of the Lord's Prayer. 3. The use of Jewish psalms in Christian worship. 4. The recitation of Creeds; and lastly, 5. The prominent place

occupied by the prayers for the Queen, the Royal Family, and the High Court of Parliament. Let us take these charges in order. CHAP. XXXVIII

1. "*The same words are repeated over and over again. There is no novelty or freshness in the prayers. Always the same stereotyped forms!*" Let us admit at the outset that the *amount* of repetition might perhaps be advantageously reduced. For example, it can hardly be necessary to repeat the exhortation thrice, or even twice, every Sunday. The hortatory or explanatory portions of the absolution again surely need not be *always* said. But these are minor matters, and matters which are in a fair way to be altered. The *principle* of repetition, however, cannot be impeached, otherwise what becomes of the Lord's Prayer? Is that to be discarded because it is a stereotyped form? Was it wrong again, was it formal, in our Blessed LORD, in the hour of His agony, to say over again the same words? But this objection applies almost equally to the prayers of the chapel. It is notorious that there too the same phrases are heard again and again. It cannot be otherwise. The ingenuity of man cannot devise either fresh subjects for public prayer, or fresh words in which to present them. The only novelty is in the *arrangement;* one does not know what stereotyped phrase to look for *next.* And this demand for novelty loses sight of the fact that there can be no novelty with GOD. The Perfect Being to whom our prayers and praises are addressed is not moved by our eloquence or ingenuity. Our needs are always the same, and He knows them, and He knows our words before we utter them. Novelty, that is to say, can only serve to please or engage *men;* it can have no charm, no efficacy, with Him with whom our souls have to do. St. Matt. xxvi. 44.

2. "*The Lord's Prayer is repeated four or five times in the morning service.*" No doubt we *do* give exceptional honour to this formulary. But is it not entitled to it? For (1) it is the prayer which our Master, the CHRIST of GOD, Himself prescribed. Other prayers are human;

CHAP. XXXVIII.

this is Divine. (2) Could we speak with the tongues of men and of angels, words so acceptable to GOD we cannot employ as those which the Son of GOD inspired. (3) Everything we can require, for soul or body, is briefly comprehended under one or other of its divisions. If it were not now long enough, our LORD would have made it longer. Hence we put it at the beginning of our prayers as a model, at the close as a finish. We are commanded to pray in CHRIST'S name; how can we do this better than in CHRIST'S own words?[1]

No, it is no reproach to the Church that she loves to repeat the very words which the Church's Head puts into her lips. The reproach belongs to those who call it a "Jewish form," who regard it as not sufficiently spiritual for advanced Christians. Some chapels will not have it at all, and in many it occupies a lower place in the estimation of the congregation than the grandiloquent flights of the minister. It is repeated indeed, but not much appears to be expected from it. There is an eminently suggestive story told, I forget by whom, of three men who were in some deadly peril. Thoroughly alarmed, one of them asked the others if either of them could say a prayer. "Nay, I only know the LORD'S Prayer," was the response he received; "*and what is the good of that?*"

3. "*Why do you chant the Psalms: they are not so Christian or searching or spiritual as Wesley's or Sankey's hymns?*" We chant the Psalter because this is the Hymn-book of GOD'S ancient Church, our Church before CHRIST; it is the Hymn-book bound up in the middle of our Bibles. We sing the Psalms because they were given by inspiration of GOD, and therefore we dare not discard them. We *may* sing modern hymns, though they are not inspired; we *must* sing the hymns of the Bible. It is true they were written by Jews, but what of that? Their GOD is also our GOD, and our hearts, our frailties, our sorrows, our needs are just like

[1] So St. Cyprian, *De Orat. Dom.*

theirs, and therefore the words in which they breathed forth their trust and prayer still find an echo in our hearts. Where is the Christian who has not found again and again in the Psalms of David the reflection of his own experiences, the very expression of his soul's needs? Where in fact, amid the trials and temptations of life, can he find words which so exactly suit his case as these? No, we can never surrender for Watts' Divine Songs or Sankey's Sacred Solos the Hymn-book which He who spake in time past unto the fathers has given as a possession for ever to His Church.[1]

4. "*You repeat Sunday by Sunday two if not three Creeds. What have these to do with the worship of the Most High?*" Why, just this, that we cannot praise GOD more than by simply stating what He *is* to us and what He has *done* for us. The Creeds are recited in our services, not as mere definitions of our belief, but as hymns of praise. It does matter to GOD indeed, and it also matters to ourselves, what we really and truly believe, for as a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he;" but it is not for this reason that day by day we repeat the Creeds of Christendom. It is because the Church can devise no better or loftier way of praising GOD than to recite His gracious acts and attributes. The religion of the day is almost entirely *subjective;* it is our "experiences," our emotions, our belief or unbelief, which are pourtrayed in the popular hymns; just as if we were the centre of the world, or at least the favourites of heaven. Now the Creeds lift our thoughts from "our dead selves to higher things"—to the God "in whose hand our breath is," the eternal, immortal, invisible One, to the Creator, Redeemer, Comforter of men.

Prov. xxiii 7.

5. "*Why these repeated prayers for the Queen and Royal Family? You should say less about the king, and more about the King of kings. You should pray less for the rich*

[1] "The choice and flower of all things profitable in other books, the Psalms do both more briefly contain and more movingly also express."—Hooker. V. xxxvii. 2.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

and more for the poor." But surely those who raise this objection are making the common mistake of our critics, namely, of evolving religious ideas out of their own consciousness and overlooking the religion of the Bible. For it so happens that we are expressly commanded to pray for the powers that be, and the reason why is alleged—it is because the peace and prosperity of the whole realm depend on them, on their characters and actions; it is because the very peace of the Church is at their mercy. They are not private persons like the rest; they make or unmake—or they did when the Apostles wrote—the court and country. Even now, in our limited monarchies, the king's will, and still more his example, is a most powerful factor for good or evil. And "the king's heart is in the hand of the LORD . . . He turneth it whithersoever He will." Who then shall blame the Church of God because she offers "supplications, prayers, intercessions, eucharists" "for kings and for all that are in authority"?

1 Tim. ii. 2.

Prov. xxi. 1.

And as to praying more for the poor and less for the rich, have they forgotten that it is not the poor but the rich who find it so hard to enter the kingdom of heaven? But, as a matter of fact, we do not pray for the rich, but for those who have the greatest influence, and therefore the greatest responsibility, and so for the king most of all. For he has temptations to which his subjects are strangers. To him the most is given; of him the most will be required. No, the Church's "State prayers" can plead apostolic prescription, and they are offered for those who of all men need them most; therefore she must not and will not relax them.

St. Luke vi. 24; xviii. 23, 24; St. James ii. 6.

In our next chapters we shall deal briefly with the Athanasian Creed.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE CREED OF ST. ATHANASIUS—PART I.

"We must as we have received, even so baptize, and as we baptize even so believe, and as we believe even so give glory."—*St. Basil, quoted by Hooker.*

The Athanasian Creed, which seemed to Luther and others of his day a very "bulwark of the faith," is now, after the Baptismal Service, perhaps the most formidable difficulty which Nonconformists, or the men of light and leading amongst them, find in the formularies of the Church. There are few things which they resent more than what they call the refinements, the hair-splitting, the dogmatism, and the uncharitableness of the *Quicunque Vult*. "It is this," said one of them, "which keeps us from your altars." Some have even derisively called it the Creed of *Satanasius*. Nor can this hostility cause us surprise when it is remembered that a large number of Churchmen, and of devout and earnest Churchmen too, dislike extremely its recitation in our services; that some clergymen never repeat it; that divines like Clarke and Chillingworth have regarded it with great uneasiness; and that archbishops like Tillotson and (we might almost add) Secker have "wished we were well rid of it." We see that it has taxed the learning and ingenuity of some of the Church's ablest writers to defend it: we can hardly wonder, therefore, that some of the very best of those outside our communion regard it with unmixed aversion.

The present writer must confess at the outset that, while he has no manner of doubt as to the *truth* of its

CHAP. XXXIX.

teachings, nor yet that such a symbol is "very necessary for these times," still it is a question with him whether its recitation by our mixed congregations, as a part of Divine Service, in lieu of the Apostles' Creed, is desirable or defensible,[1] and he would gladly see it relegated by competent authority — whether of general council or national synod—to its place in the Articles. But so far is he from underrating its value as an exposition of the faith—or a part of the faith—that he is convinced that the gain to our English Christianity would have been immense if we had possessed similar statements of Catholic belief, or, what is the same thing, of Scripture teaching on other similar controverted questions. If we had had as clear and succinct definitions, say of "the church" or of "the doctrines of grace"—the "plan of salvation" as it is popularly called—we might have been preserved from the vagaries, the crudities, the often grotesque and dangerous teachings which pass for "the pure gospel," but which in reality are "another gospel." In our dread of dogmatism we often leave the door wide open to fanaticism. For the sake of those who occupy the room of the unlearned we want more definition of belief and not less. But it is quite another thing to make these elaborate definitions tests of communion; to enforce them with anathemas, and to recite them as hymns of praise. But let us now turn to the Creed itself.

The objections often felt, and sometimes ostentatiously expressed, by Churchmen no less than Nonconformists, to the Athanasian symbol, are these:—First, it is said to be a tissue of nice metaphysical speculations and subtleties about the Being of GOD and the Incarnation of our LORD. Secondly, it is alleged to give an undue prominence to *belief;* to make the gospel a mere *dogma;* to rank a sound faith above a holy life. Lastly, the damnatory clauses are said to be inconsistent with the spirit of our Master, and themselves to savour of "dam-

[1] "It appears, as forming part of our public services, utterly indefensible."—Bishop Thirlwall.

nable uncharitableness." What then can we say to these allegations?

To the first of these charges (which alone we can deal with in the present chapter) we reply: The definitions of the Athanasian Creed were forced upon the church, as "the pillar and ground of the truth," as the keeper and witness of Holy Writ, by the statements of the church's Head. Whatever difficulties may attach to the *Quicunque*, they have their germ and origin in the words of our LORD Himself—in such words, for example, as St. Matt. xxviii. 19, or St. John x. 30, and xiv. 28. For the sake of brevity we here confine ourselves to our Saviour's words about the Trinity, but the same remarks will apply *mutatis mutandis* to His reference to the Incarnation. We say then that it pleased GOD, and that by the lips of His Son, to reveal Himself to man as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And this was no casual utterance, no *obiter dictum;* it is the very keystone of the Christian revelation. Just as the *Shema Israel*, proclaiming the Unity of GOD, was the keynote of Judaism, so is the baptismal formula, "Into the name (singular) of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," proclaiming the Trinity in Unity, the watchword of Christianity. The doctrine of the Trinity, that is to say, so far from being an invention of ecclesiastics, a "metaphysical puzzle" adopted by Churchmen, is entailed upon us—so that we cannot escape from it—by (to speak of nothing else) the formula of baptism and the formula of blessing. No doubt the Athanasian Creed is charged with mysteries, but the mysteries are only unfolded and exposed to view there: they existed before the Creed exhibited them; they exist equally, though in germ, in embryo, in the words of our LORD Himself. The mischief, if it is a mischief, was done when He gave the great commission in those mysterious words. That was the first step which necessitated all the rest. The "hair-splittings" of the Creed are but the logical consequences of this and similar declarations of our Saviour JESUS CHRIST.

St. Matt. *loc. cit.*

Deut. vi. 4

St. Matt. xxviii. 19. 2 Cor. xiii 14.

CHAP. XXXIX.

For when once these words were spoken, when this revelation was once given, it was inevitable that men would speculate as to its import. Indeed, it would have been not only unnatural, but culpable—culpable indifference and disrespect—had they not done so. It is quite true we can never touch the bottom of this mystery, but we owe it to the truth to go as far down as we can. It is not, it cannot be, wrong to meditate reverently on the meaning of *any* words of our Blessed LORD, and least of all on such watchwords as these. Once they were the possession of the church, it was inevitable that men would frame their theories—in other words, would try to discover what teaching the words had for them, and then to express that teaching as clearly and guardedly as possible. Who is to blame them for so doing—even if it *has* led to the Athanasian Creed?

Moreover, it was inevitable that the mystery of the Godhead, to which the baptismal formula testified, and which it sprang, so to speak, upon the church, should be misread and misrepresented. The enemy of GOD and man is for ever corrupting and depraving the truth, and—*corruptio optimi pessima.* It is his masterpiece to misrepresent GOD. With this the father of lies began, and Christendom to-day witnesses to his success. To take one instance: To how many thousands is the Blessed Holy Father a tyrant, a taskmaster, a slave-driver? In the Calvinists' Deity John Wesley recognised the features of his devil. "The accuser of the brethren" to GOD has also been the accuser of GOD to the brethren, and to misrepresent the sacred Name has been his favourite work. To some the temptation has presented itself to explain away the words of CHRIST; to others to be "wise above what is written." Thus it comes to pass that the history of doctrine is largely a history of heresies and misbeliefs. The true faith of a Christian, as has been already remarked, always lies between a Scylla and a Charybdis. And it was natural that in the first centuries of our faith heresies should chiefly gather round the "Name"

Gen. iii. 1–5.

Rev. xii. 10.

of GOD. Those who were baptized as adults must perforce express their belief in the Godhead into whose Name they were baptized, that is to say, in "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." But *what* were they to believe? In three Gods—which is Tritheism? Or are Father, Son, and Holy Ghost no more than three "names," three *aspects* of the same Glorious Being—which is Sabellianism? Is CHRIST mere man—which is Arianism; or is He GOD and not man—which is the heresy of the Apollinarians and Eutychians? Men must have *some* ideas on these subjects, and those ideas, owing to the mystery on which they were exercised, might well be wrong. And history shows as a matter of fact that not unfrequently they have been wrong.

For all the misbeliefs as to the nature of the Supreme Being indicated above, and many others, were held and advocated in the first four centuries. To many, no doubt, they will seem very trivial matters, but that is because they have not realised the consequences of such misbeliefs. For example: Is CHRIST mere man? Then how can He be "the propitiation for our sins"? Then the Jews were justified in stoning Him. Is He not man? Then how can He be the Mediator between GOD and man? "And a closer examination of these heresies would probably detect in each the germ at least of a disastrous and fatal misconception of the character, office, or doctrine of Him in Whom our one hope centres."[1] No, the Church, as the depositary and keeper of the truth, could not tamely acquiesce in these departures from the truth. She owed it to the souls of her children not to leave them a prey to baleful error. How could she sit still whilst grievous wolves were tearing the flock, whilst Christian teachers were "speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them"? She had no option in the matter: a necessity was laid upon her to define correctly *just because others had defined erroneously*. We may regret that such necessity should

1 John ii. 2; iv. 10. St. John viii. 59; x. 33. 1 Tim. ii. 5.

Acts xx 30.

[1] Dr. Vaughan, *Revision of the Liturgy*.

CHAP. XXXIX

ever have arisen, but it did arise. And this was the origin of the Athanasian Creed. "Almost every word . . . was molten in the fire of controversy."[1] "Each of its doctrinal clauses is not so much the statement of a truth as the repudiation of an existing and dangerous error."[2] Bishop Harold Browne, in his book on the Articles, indicates the several heresies against which the various clauses of the Creed were directed. Each dogma, as it is called, is the denial of some untruth held and taught about GOD. And this is the answer, and I submit that it is a sufficient answer, to the charge of "minute metaphysical distinctions." The Athanasian Creed was the inevitable result of the baptismal formula. It was entailed on the Church by CHRIST'S own mysterious words. It is not true, as some have affirmed, that the Church has "revelled" in these theological subtleties; indeed, it is likely that but for the heresies which arose, and which, it was evident from the first, must arise, the Apostles' Creed would have sufficed, as it did in the first days, to enshrine the belief of Christendom. Not that that Creed is really simpler than the Athanasian. The mystery is *there*, though no attempt is made to unfold it. "The unthinking person sees less difficulty in the Apostles' Creed, because he gives himself no trouble about understanding the words," whereas the Athanasian Creed seems harder because it "answers a thousand questions which the few simple words of the shorter creed suggest, but do not solve."[3] But, be that as it may, the fact remains that the elaborate definitions of the *Quicunque* have been forced upon us, not by the love of dogmatism and controversy, but by the speculations of heretics who troubled the peace of the Church, and made it a necessity that dogmatic error should be confronted with and corrected by careful and exact statements of dogmatic truth.

Acts xx. 30; 1 Cor. xi 9; 2 Pet. ii. 1.

[1] Bartlett, *Bampton Lectures* for 1888, p. 137.
[2] Dr. Vaughan, *Revision*.
[3] Sadler, *Church Doctrine—Bible Truth*, p. 27.

CHAPTER XL.

THE CREED OF ST. ATHANASIUS—PART II.

"If indeed the Church, by declaring an Article, can make that to be necessary which before was not necessary, I do not see how it can stand with the charity of the Church to do so."

—*Jeremy Taylor.*

A SECOND and a common complaint lodged against the Athanasian Creed — one closely allied to the grave indictment already dealt with—is, that it attaches an altogether exaggerated and absurd importance to *belief;* that it makes our salvation to depend on our assent to a series of theological propositions, rather than on our having the mind and living the life of our Saviour CHRIST. We are reminded that "the gospel is a *dynamis* and not a *dogma*"—a force, and not a faith. We are told—what is indeed true—that the "Christian Church is a body of worshippers and not of philosophers," and that "the faith required of a man to be a Christian is faith in a Person and not in a system; faith in facts and promises more than in dogmas or in truths."[1] And the *Quicunque* is supposed to be in direct contravention of these ideas, and to misconceive and misrepresent our religion because it unhesitatingly affirms that "Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic faith." And this alleged necessity is a real stumbling-block, both to some Churchmen and to many Nonconformists.

It is to be observed, however, in the first place, that, even if this is so, no subscription to this Creed is exacted

[1] Myers, *Catholic Thoughts.*

CHAP. XL.

from any of the laity of England. The clergy—the officers and instructors of the Church — do subscribe with their hand to the statement that this Creed, along with the Apostles' and the Nicene symbols, "ought thoroughly to be received and believed, for they may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture."[1] But no such ordeal, if it be an ordeal, awaits the conforming layman. He *is* committed to a belief in the Apostles' Creed, for he cannot be baptized or confirmed without it, but he is not pledged to any acceptance of either the Constantinopolitan or Athanasian teachings. That is to say, he does not forfeit or even compromise his membership in the Church—he cannot, for example, be denied the sacraments—if he presumes to think this or that article of the Creed recited in the Church unwise or unscriptural, any more than if he thinks this or that lesson read in the Church unedifying or uninspired. And herein our National Church has surely shown a wise tolerance. The multiplication of tests of membership is every way undesirable. While careful of the orthodoxy of her clergy, the Church may reasonably concede to her lay members a certain latitude of belief. They are not, they cannot be expected to be, theologians; it is therefore idle, if not mischievous, curiously to inquire into their private opinions. For "when you have multiplied dogmas, be they never so true, yet if all men cannot see their truth you have set up stumbling-blocks to truth rather than made its way clear."[2] "Children's clothes," says Thomas Fuller — speaking of the breadth of the Articles—"ought to be made of the biggest, because afterwards their bodies will grow up to their garments." To impose a stringent rule of belief, however true we may ourselves think it to be, on each and every member of the Church would be to invite and provoke endless schisms. And so the Church in this land exacts as the condition of full membership the confession of faith which sufficed for

[1] Article VIII. [2] Bishop Jeremy Taylor.

the first Christians, the Apostles' Creed, and no more. She furnishes her children, she was compelled by the speculations of heretics to furnish her children, with guidance, with instruction, on those other weighty matters of which the later Creeds speak, and she invites them publicly to assent to her definitions. But if any members—most unhappily, as I think—decline to do this (and some Churchmen, we know, do decline) she does not put them to open penance nor exclude them from her altars. A sect must perforce notice every transgression of the sectarian boundaries, because it is for the sake of those boundaries that the sect exists; they are its *raison d'être;* but the Catholic Church may not lightly deny her treasures of grace, the grace of which she is the depositary, to any of her children. Their privileges as communicants must not be abridged by reason of their defective beliefs, for indeed, whose belief is not more or less defective? To their own Master they stand or fall. If they repudiate this or that article of the Creed, they do it at their own risk. No one will say—in the face of the "damnatory clauses" —that the Church has not solemnly warned them, and discharged her duty towards them. Anyhow, it is clear that acceptance of much or little of the *Quicunque* is not involved by conforming to the Church, and consequently, if that venerable formulary does really overstate the necessity for a right belief—and this is the charge which we have now to consider—or if in any similar way it is "contrary to sound doctrine," still, even on the principles laid down by Nonconformists themselves,[1] such misconception is no adequate ground for Nonconformity, for breaking the peace and unity of the Church, and for introducing a schism into the one Body of CHRIST.

But has the Creed done this? Does it anywhere contradict or go beyond the teaching of Scripture? If it does, the Church of England is profoundly unconscious of it. It is undeniable that, though part of her Catholic

[1] See below, p. 353.

CHAP. XL.

heritage, the Church only clings to this formulary and rehearses it in her services because she is firmly persuaded that each proposition can "be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture." She sees in every article part of "the faith once for all delivered to the saints;" part of the revelation made by GOD to man. Otherwise, there would be a direct contradiction between the Creed and the Sixth Article of Religion, which proclaims that "whatsoever is not read therein [in Holy Scripture] nor may be proved thereby is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an *article of the faith.*" The "Catholic faith," as here set forth, is pronounced necessary to everlasting salvation only because its several parts are each the echo of, or a necessary inference from, the Divine Word. It is commonly assumed that the Creed goes far beyond the sober statement of Holy Writ, but it is an entirely gratuitous assumption. Every article is a part of the *depositum* entrusted to the Church's keeping. That *depositum* has not been *enlarged* since the apostles' days; it has only been guarded and defined. The Creed has not "multiplied dogmas;" it has but collected them from the sacred Word.

And if this is so—if these propositions of the *Quicunque* may reasonably be inferred from Holy Scripture, as assuredly they may—then which of them are we at liberty to reject? It may be quite true that the repudiation of this or that particular statement does not of itself appear to lead to any direful consequences; quite true that not every affirmation or denial can be called *articulus stantis ecclesiae;* the gravity of repudiation lies in this—that it is an act of disbelief. We have no more right to pick and choose amongst the articles of the faith than amongst the commandments of GOD.[1] It

[1] "The heretical spirit is seen in that cold, critical temper, that self-confident and self-willed attitude which accepts and rejects opinions on principles of its own, quite independently of the principles which are the guaranteed and historical guides of the Church."—Dr. Plummer, *Pastoral Epist.*, p. 294 *sqq.*

CHAP. XL.

was in itself an insignificant thing to take an apple, but it is said to have cost our first parents their paradise, just because it proved disobedience. The man who "keeps the whole law, and yet offends in one point," is "guilty of all," in that he is guilty of *disobedience*, of resisting the Divine will; even so the man who accepts the whole Creed, and yet repudiates one part, *i.e.*, does not "keep it whole and undefiled," is "guilty of all," in that he is guilty of *disbelief*. And disbelief is nothing else than mental disobedience.

St. James ii. 10.

I say "repudiates," for the Creed speaks only of those who have received the faith and then rejected it. It speaks of "holding (*teneat*) the Catholic faith:" of "keeping (*servaverit*) it whole," &c. But who can "hold" what he has never had? And where nothing has been received, nothing will be required. Part of the strong aversion to the Athanasian Creed which may be traced amongst us arises from the absurd idea that it consigns to perdition, without any discrimination, all who do not know and believe every jot and tittle of it. But a moment's reflection will show that it cannot and does not speak of those who have never heard the gospel, nor yet of those to whom the faith of the gospel has never been fully preached, nor yet of those who ignorantly reject this or that part of it. Its condemnation is reserved for those who have had the truth of GOD put fully and plainly before them, and have then, in the pride of reason or the contemptuous arrogance of self-will, refused to accept it.

And that this Creed does not recognise mere belief, mere assent to such and such "dogmas" (the word is quite enough for some people, though "dogmas" merely mean fixed opinions, from which no man can be free), as the one condition of salvation, apart from our characters and actions, is evident from its own language about the resurrection: "They that have *done good* shall go into life everlasting, and they that have *done evil* into everlasting fire." That mere dogmas will not save is itself a part of the Catholic faith, for "the Catholic

CHAP. XL.

faith is that we *worship* one GOD in Trinity," &c. The Creed itself proclaims that "the Christian Church is a body of worshippers and not of philosophers."

But it is objected that the Creed, in any case, gives an undue prominence to belief. To this we may reply that it only echoes the words of our LORD and His apostles as to the necessity of faith. For just as the teaching of this Creed on the subject of the Trinity may be traced up to the baptismal formula—just as this latter, *i.e.*, is the germ in which the whole Creed lies enfolded, as the oak is wrapped up in the acorn—so its doctrine of belief is based on those other words of the great commission, "He that believeth . . . shall be saved, but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned. Compare St. John iii. 16, 18, 36; viii. 24; ix. 35; xiv. 1; Acts ix. 20; Rom. i. 2–4; x. 9; 1 John ii. 22; iv. 2, 3; v. *passim*. It is needless to cite other Scriptures, for it will hardly be maintained by any serious writer that the Creed makes more of belief than the Bible does. And even a cursory reference to the passages just cited will show that the belief which saves, or rather the disbelief which condemns, is a disbelief in the person and work—the Sonship, Incarnation, and Resurrection of CHRIST. In other words, Creed and Scripture are at one as to the necessity of faith; Creed and Scripture are at one as to the sort of faith necessary to salvation. You say the faith of a Christian is faith in a Person; the Creed speaks of a Person (or Persons), and nothing else.

St. Matt. xxviii. 19.

St. Mark xvi. 16, R.V.

But what if we are told, as sometimes happens when we prove an unwelcome truth to be scriptural; what if we are told that Creed and Scripture lie under the same condemnation; that *both* attach too much importance to dogmas; that we can have "religion without theology;" that it matters little what a man believes or disbelieves, provided his life is sound, &c. The answer to this is (1) that our belief is the outcome, the index, the exponent of ourselves; and (2) that our lives are nothing else than the reflections of our beliefs. "As he thinketh

See note, p. 275.

CHAP. XL.

in his heart, so is he." We are just as responsible for our belief as for our conduct. Our belief, our acceptance or rejection, that is to say, of this or that "dogma," is not an accident over which we have no control; it depends on our moral fibre and spiritual perceptions. "Unbelief is the result of habits of mind in the formation of which man has been throughout and alone the agent." . . . "Every time that we omit our morning or evening prayer we are contributing towards the inability to believe . . . every impure thought, every unholy imagination is creating in us the inability ever to believe. . . . These things make it our interest to disbelieve the gospel." "Vanity, wilfulness, indolence, perverseness—these things may cost us our faith, and, if our faith, then our salvation."[1] And disbelief, it may be added, costs us our salvation, not only because it evidences defects in our characters, but also because it will inevitably colour and control our conduct. Belief is the basis and measure of morality. Convictions are the springs of conduct; our lives are the products of our Creeds. It is for this reason also that the Catholic Faith, the faith of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is, and must be, pronounced to be "necessary to everlasting salvation."

Prov. xxiii. 7. St. John v. 44; vii. 17; xii. 39; St. Matt. xxi. 32, &c

[1] Dr. Vaughan, *Revision of the Liturgy.*

Note. "Do not be misled by the popular cry against the tyranny of exact theological thinking. . . . Definitions may be necessary in order to make the real issue clear. Athanasius defined because the Arians shuffled."—Dr. R. W. Dale.

"Individual Christians, if ever they grow into the manhood of reason, must have a theology, or cease to be religious . . . religious haziness is generally, if not always, the outcome of moral laziness."—Canon Aubrey Moore.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE CREED OF ST. ATHANASIUS—PART III.:—THE DAMNATORY CLAUSES.

"For the articles themselves, I am most heartily persuaded of the truth of them, and yet I dare not say that all that are not so are irrevocably damned."—*Jeremy Taylor.*

THOUGH I venture to hope that the preceding chapter has removed *some* of the difficulties felt with regard to the "damnatory clauses"—the name is a sinister and unfortunate one—of the Athanasian Creed, yet these forcible statements, rightly regarded as the *crux* of the formulary, demand a brief further notice.

For this Creed undeniably begins and ends with a solemn commination: "Which faith, except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly." . . . "This is the Catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully (*fideliter firmiterque crediderit*) he cannot be saved." Which of us, as these strong words have fallen on the ear, has not felt a strange dread and misgiving?

> "O Athanasius, thy too subtle Creed
> Makes my heart tremble when I hear it read,
> And my flesh quivers, when the priest proclaims
> God's doom on every unbeliever's head."

Nor has it brought us relief that we can honestly share in the sentiment which follows:—

> "Yet do I honour thee for those brave words
> Against the heretic so boldly hurled;
> 'Though no one else believes, I'll hold my faith,
> I, Athanasius, against the world.'"

CHAP XLI.

For the Creed has seemed to us to sound the death knell of thousands upon thousands even of our fellow Christians. We cannot pretend that *they*—some of them men whom we have known and honoured—"kept the faith whole and undefiled," or that they believed each separate proposition "firmly and faithfully;" must they therefore, we have asked, "perish everlastingly"? We could not bring ourselves to believe it, and therefore we have disbelieved the Creed, which seems to affirm it.

It may perhaps be well to say at the outset that no amount of *retranslation*—which has been much recommended of late—will obviate or materially reduce this difficulty. Deliverance must arise, if at all, from some other quarter. Even if we might render the opening words, "Whosoever wishes to be safe," and the last words, "He cannot be on the safe side"—which is more than doubtful—the second sentence, "Which faith," &c., and the 27th, "Moreover, it is necessary to *everlasting salvation*," &c., remain in undiminished force. And a chain is not stronger than its weakest link.

We have already seen that the Creed does not speak of those who have never received the Catholic faith; that it does not refer to *non*-belief but to *dis*-belief, and to deliberate and avowed disbelief. We have now to add that, literal and precise as these comminatory clauses may appear to be, they are not to be taken literally: they cannot, whatever they may seem at first sight to say, mean that a man must consciously and intelligently hold every single article of this formulary, under peril of damnation. We shall find that the Creed, in these clauses as elsewhere, only echoes the language of our LORD Himself, and that the doom of which it speaks is reserved for those who renounce the Catholic faith as a whole—not for men who may mislike this or that definition, or ignorantly cavil at this or that affirmation. The disbelief, in fact, which it condemns is the disbelief which our Saviour CHRIST condemned and no other. For just as the definitions of the Creed respecting the Trinity have their germ and their justifica-

St. Mark xvi. 16.

CHAP. XLI.

St. Mark xvi. 16.

tion in the baptismal formula, so, as already remarked, the "damnatory clauses" have theirs in the commination or warning attached to the baptismal commission: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned."

But it will be objected that if we may look for precision, for exact and careful statement anywhere, surely it is in such a document as this. It will be said that these are formal definitions, and definitions, too, of the very conditions of our salvation. But our answer is that our LORD'S words just cited—the words on which these "damnatory clauses" rest—are the same: they are *His* definition of the conditions of salvation, and a definition given, too, under circumstances of singular solemnity, and yet they are not, and cannot be, construed literally. Those words have to be construed broadly, have to be interpreted in the light of other Scriptures and of other considerations, and we submit that the *Quicunque* may be and must be interpreted in the same way. I say that the solemn and authoritative words found in St. Mark xvi. 16 cannot be construed literally. For according to them baptism is absolutely necessary to salvation. Our LORD mentions two conditions—mentions them in the same breath—belief *and* baptism. Both are required for everlasting salvation. It is of no use to say that in the next clause "He that disbelieveth shall be damned"—nothing is said about the unbaptized, for (1) no one that disbelieved was at all likely to be baptized, and (2) the omission here does not undo or neutralise, even if it "somewhat softens," the insertion there. No; according to CHRIST Himself, baptism is necessary to salvation. And yet, who can suppose that all who have believed and have not been baptized are lost! Take the penitent thief, for example —we must certainly make him an exception. So we are at once compelled to limit and qualify this sentence of our CHRIST, this germ of the damnatory clauses, and divines have come to the common-sense conclusion that baptism is only necessary *where it may be had.*

Then there is the community of the Friends or Quakers—what shall we say of them? Here are men and women positively conspicuous for their "belief," for their Christlike lives and tempers, but they are not baptized. In fact, it is one of their principles—they make it a point of conscience—on no account to submit to this ordinance of our LORD. Must they then be lost? Is there no hope for them? On the contrary, we have every hope for them. We say—and the same remark applies to the Salvationists and others who disregard baptism—that the merciful GOD will make allowance for prejudice, for invincible ignorance and hereditary misunderstanding. That is to say, we interpret our LORD'S commination, strict and literal as it appears to be, on His own principles of charity and common sense, and so we further conclude that *grace is not tied to the means of grace*, and that some of the unbaptized will be saved after all—will be saved, our LORD'S express words notwithstanding.

But it is not only in this matter of *disobedience* that we are compelled to interpret our Saviour's words generously: it is in that very matter of *disbelief* of which the Creed speaks. For we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that vast numbers of Christians—and amongst them some of the most zealous and honest and spiritual—in the judgment of their fellow Christians, have disbelieved the gospel of CHRIST, and have substituted for it "another gospel, which is not another." In the judgment of John Wesley, who said that their GOD was his devil, the followers of Calvin did and still do this. But, on the other hand, one of the most eminent of these, Mr. Spurgeon, is never weary of telling us that large numbers of Congregationalist and Baptist ministers neither hold nor preach the gospel. He says their flocks are taught to disbelieve it. But do we therefore conclude, does he conclude, that these congregations of misbelievers will be one and all "condemned"? It is the profound conviction of many Churchmen again that large numbers of Dissenters, especially of the cruder

CHAP. XLI.

type, only hold "bits of the faith." With many, perhaps even with most, the gospel is identified with a third part of the gospel—that is to say, with the work or rather the death of our Saviour CHRIST. Not only is the gospel of the Fatherhood no gospel at all to them, but there are some who energetically oppose it as dangerous; they think it clashes with the doctrine of the atonement. In the scheme of others, the sanctifying work of the HOLY SPIRIT holds a very inconspicuous place. Even the Incarnation is practically a dead letter in their Creed. But it is obvious to those who reflect that just as there is a Triune GOD so there is a triune gospel—the gospel of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. And of this trinity, as of that other, it may be truly said that "none is afore or after other; none is greater or less than another." The gospel of the Son, which very commonly does duty for the whole gospel, is not more blessed or more necessary than that of the Father or that of the Holy Spirit. But with thousands at the present day the "faith of the gospel" has but one or two articles, such as the merit of CHRIST'S blood and instantaneous ecstatic conversion. And they will not hear of more; we are "corrupting the simplicity of the gospel" if we speak of more. The rest they "disbelieve." But do we therefore despair of their salvation? Does their love for CHRIST, their zeal for souls, count for nothing? On the contrary, we believe that through the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST they shall be saved even as we. We remember that what GOD really requires is an honest and true heart; that what our LORD really denounced is *wilful* unbelief—the unbelief that is begotten of pride and obstinacy and self-will—and so we read this qualification into his commination; we presume, that is to say, to interpret even His formal and precise declaration not according to the letter which killeth, but according to its spirit and natural significance.

Acts xv. 11.

And all that we ask is that the same rules of common sense may be applied to the interpretation of these

"damnatory clauses." Why should we suppose, for example, that these clauses can condemn those who have never had a chance of holding the "Catholic faith"—especially when the Creed is on the face of it a warning to the Church's own children? What has induced men to think, that is to say, that where nothing has been given, much will nevertheless be required? Or why should we suppose again that the clauses refer to involuntary and unconscious unbelief? Why should we think that the Father of spirits can have no "compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way"? Or why should we assume that belief in "the Catholic faith" involves believing every jot and tittle of that faith—any more than believing the gospel implies believing every jot and tittle of the gospel? Or rather, why should we suppose that the framers of the Creed held any such views? Whoever they were, they were certainly deep thinkers and profound theologians; why then should we credit them with such ignorance and narrowness? Why should we suppose that *their* language alone is to be construed without any qualification; why is the *Quicunque* alone to be always taken at the foot of the letter?

But it is not difficult to account for the hard judgment that has been passed on these clauses. It has been forgotten that their very stringency is kind and merciful; it has been overlooked that they are meant to operate as warnings, and that a warning to be of any use must be plain and outspoken—it would lose its force, it would defeat its object, if it were hedged about with limitations and specified numerous exceptions. This is why our LORD says, without any limitation in favour of ignorance or infirmity, "He that disbelieveth shall be condemned;" and this is why the Church echoes His warning, also without any limitation or exception: "This is the Catholic Faith, which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved." It is for this reason the Church also says the faith must be kept *whole and undefiled.* It is not for her to teach her children that possibly this or

CHAP XLI.

that article may be rejected without risk; it is for her to proclaim that *all* disbelief is full of danger and under sentence of damnation. But having done this she may remember that GOD will certainly make allowances, though we cannot do so, and may recite these solemn comminations with the sure and certain hope that the Judge of all the earth will do right and assign to each his just recompense of reward.

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CHAPTER XLII.

THE BURIAL SERVICE.

"The Church determines nothing concerning the future state of those that depart before they are admitted to baptism, but since they have not been received within the pale of the Church, we cannot properly use an office at their funeral which all along supposes the person that is buried to have died in her communion."—*Wheatley.*

AFTER the Athanasian Creed, the next point in our Prayer Book Services to which serious exception is taken—the three forms of Absolution, the Baptismal Office, the Catechism, and the rite of Confirmation have been already considered under the head of DOCTRINES—is found in the office for the BURIAL OF THE DEAD.

And here it is worthy of remark that against the service itself no objection is alleged. That is universally allowed to be a singularly chaste and elevated form of words. The charge brought against this office applies exclusively to the opening rubric. The *service* is said to be innocent enough, but it is sometimes used over the wrong persons. We are reminded that whilst we deny, and are compelled to deny, the rites of Christian burial to an Elizabeth Fry or a John Bright—their eminent virtues notwithstanding—or to an innocent babe, just because they were unbaptized, we concede and must concede the same rites to men of godless and profligate lives, if it so happens that a few words were said over them in infancy and a few drops of water were sprinkled on their brows.

And the objection is all the more formidable because men are naturally so particularly sensitive as to any-

CHAP. XLII.

thing which affects the reputation of their dead. These "Burial Scandals," as they are termed, have done infinite mischief to the Church.

Let us suppose, however, for the sake of argument, that this objection hits a grievous blot, and that this rubric cries aloud for revision; still the question remains: Is it such a blot as to justify secession? Is it necessary to create or maintain a split amongst Christians, just because the Burial Service is occasionally used over the wrong persons? It is not as if the conforming layman was compelled to use this service himself—he need not even seem to sanction it by his presence—the strain, if any, is on the conscience of the clergyman. The question is whether a man baptized into the "one body" is required to create or perpetuate a breach, a "schism in the body," just because he suspects—it can only be *suspicion;* he can never be quite sure, because he cannot read the hearts and fathom the motives of men—that the clergy have occasionally to use this service where it is altogether misplaced. This is the question candid Nonconformists have to answer. But we do not admit that this rubric involves unchristian error. I am prepared to stand by it. I am prepared to justify, first, its denial of *this* Burial Office to the unbaptized, and secondly, the use of words of faith and hope over the graves of men who have neither lived nor, so far *as we can see*, died, in the faith and practice of the Christian.

And it will materially assist my defence, if we clearly understand at the outset what this service is and what it is not. It is *not* (1) an office for the benefit of the dead; it is no *viaticum* to fortify the departed on their last long journey; no *oblatio pro mortuis*, like the services of the unreformed church; it is (as Augustine long since ruled that funeral rites should be) a service designed for the consolation and edification of the living. No sensible person can suppose that the use or non-use of this liturgy affects the state of the departed, or can make it better or worse for the soul at the judgment-seat of

CHRIST. No; the Psalm, the Lesson, the Collect, are all for the benefit of the living. Observe, I am not concerned to deny that this order contains an indirect prayer for the departed, but if it does, it is only for the *faithful* departed, and only that we with them may have "our perfect consummation and bliss both of body and soul" in GOD'S "eternal and everlasting glory." It makes no pretension whatever to alter the state of the dead; its supplications, no less than its exhortations, are for the survivors. A reference to the service itself will make this perfectly clear.

Nor is this office (2) in any sense a sentence on the state of the dead over whom it is used. No doubt it assumes that they were Christians in more than name, but it does not pronounce on their merits or destiny; it could not possibly do so. That would be to "judge before the time;" to take the decision out of GOD'S hands into ours. But there is not a syllable which can be construed into a verdict on the dead. The language is the language of hope. It does indeed express a "sure and *certain* hope," but it is in "*the* resurrection to eternal life"—not (as is very generally supposed) in the resurrection to eternal life of this particular man or woman. In that case, its language would be, "In sure and certain hope of *his* (or *her*) resurrection," &c. The service then may be a sort of evidence of respectability, but it is no certificate of salvation.

We see then what and what alone the concession or denial of this service amounts to. It is no benefit or injury to the dead. If "buried with the rites of the Church," they are no better; if refused those rites, they are no worse. The Burial Service leaves them as it found them. The *friends* of the dead may be deprived of comfort and instruction; the dead themselves lose nothing.

I. But it is not on this ground that we justify the denial of this service to the unbaptized. It is simply because it is a service for the baptized and no other. It might, of course, have been constructed on a different

CHAP. XLII.

principle; it might have ignored altogether the Bible idea of the "body," of the visible Christian society. But being what it is—a service held by the members of a certain society, the Church, over the grave of a member of that society, it would be manifestly absurd to use it over men who had never been admitted into that society. These latter may be, really and truly, better men than many who have been admitted, but still the fact remains that the former have been admitted and the latter not. It is no hardship or injustice to me that I cannot be buried with military or Masonic honours, because I have never been a soldier or a Freemason. I might possibly *deserve* such honours more than some who receive them, but all the same I shall be denied them, and that just because I am in no way entitled to them, and it would be confusing and misleading to grant them to me. Now this service is a Church service, and all that it implies is that the dead man was a member of the visible church. And the entrance to the visible church—and no other church is revealed to us in Scripture—is through the gate of Baptism. The Head of the Church has so willed it. We hear much pleasantry, not to say blasphemy, about a few drops of water and a dozen words; surely men must forget WHO it was appointed that same water and those words. The CHRIST of GOD has chosen this simple rite—perhaps designedly made simple—as the formal act by which disciples are initiated into His society; and if men decline to be admitted in His way; if they think, for example, that it is not spiritual enough, then they must take the consequences—one of which is that they cannot claim any share in rites which were intended and are reserved for members of the society. So far, then, from the Church being chargeable with bigotry because she restricts the rites and offices of the visible church to members of the visible church, is it not something like effrontery for men who have steadily refused to join the Church to make an outcry, or for their friends to represent them as martyrs, because those rites are or will be denied them?

And that this and nothing else is the ground which the Church in England takes is obvious from the rubric itself. Three classes of persons are excluded from the Church's rites of burial, viz., the "unbaptized," the "excommunicate," and "those who have laid violent hands on themselves." But why this singular classification? Because the *first* have never been admitted into the Church; the *second* have been put out of the benefits of the Church; and the *third* have by their own act put themselves out.

So that the right or wrong of this rubric really turns, as do so many of our theological differences, on the question, "What is the Church?" The Prayer Book has no sort of doubt that it is a visible body, a net which gathers in of every kind, and it arranges her services accordingly.

II. But I have now briefly to justify the use of those few words of hope which the service contains—they are only words of *hope*—when the dead have, so far as we can see, lived and died in impenitence, or worse.

And, first, it is to be remembered that if the relatives of the dead man feel that the service would be inappropriate; if they feel that it would be in sharp or painful contrast with his life and character, they can ask for and have an alternative service, provided for such cases. But *they* must assent to this. The clergyman must not decree it *ex mero arbitrio*. The Church rightly denies him the power of passing any sort of excommunication upon men when dead whom he did not excommunicate while they lived and could answer for themselves. And this reminds us that the true remedy for these painful anomalies lies in the revival of discipline amongst us, which, beset though it is with difficulties, is "much to be desired."

But what if the man, after an infamous life, has died in a drunken brawl, or in a brothel, and the relatives insist on the Prayer Book service—what then? Then they are *not to be denied whatever comfort or admonition they can find in that service.*

CHAP. XLII.

It is true the very opening words, "I am the Resurrection and the Life," and many other sentences will fall on the ear with a strange sound of mockery, but that is only because we persist in applying the service to the dead when all the time it is meant for the living. We read into it a reference to *him*, when all the while the words are addressed to *us*. However this man may have lived and died, CHRIST *is* the resurrection and the life.

But we give God hearty thanks for that He has "delivered this our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world," and we say we "hope this our brother" rests in Christ. Well, he is our "brother," even though a wayward and erring brother. The "prodigal son" was still a son and still a brother. But that is a small matter. This is the important point:—Is there any creature whom CHRIST has taken into His arms in His own appointed rite of Baptism for whom we can have absolutely no hope? We may have little or no hope of *his repentance*—though this is precisely what the popular theology is most hopeful about:

> "Between the stirrup and the ground
> He mercy sought and mercy found."

But are we entitled to say, even of the worst of them,
Psa. iii. 2. "There is no hope for him *in his God.*" What right have we to set a limit to His infinite compassion? What right have we to anticipate the day of judgment, and pass our sentence on the dead? Perhaps we are told—we often are—that GOD is just as well as merciful. Our reply is that it is precisely *because God is just* that we venture to hope that He will take into account (as we cannot) hereditary taint—*atavism* it is sometimes called—evil training, adverse influences, special temptations, secret motives, and a score of things that we know nothing of. You say you can have no hope of a Borgia, a Danton, a Marat; but who knows but that, if they had had your chances, their virtues might have exceeded yours; who knows but that, if you had had their ancestry,

their natures, their surroundings, your evil deeds might have out-numbered theirs? No, we dare not abandon hope, because we dare not put a limit either to the mercy or the equity of the Most High. Specially when we remember that His love for us does not cease when the breath leaves the body, and that the Good Shepherd goes after the lost sheep *until He finds it.* If, therefore, the friends of the dead find any consolation in the service, far be it from us to deny it them just because we must express a hope—not an opinion but a wish—that even this man may, after life's fitful fever, be sleeping in the peace of CHRIST. It is only an iron Calvinism or a sour Puritanism would grudge such a hope, such a wish, even to the worst of men.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE BURIAL SERVICE—PART II.—THE INTERMEDIATE STATE.

"There must be two changes; first, the act of passing from this present life to the state, whatever it is, which immediately succeeds it, and another, from that state to the one which is to take place at the resurrection."—*Archbishop Whately.*

HAVING proved, as I venture to think, in the preceding paper, that there is nothing in the Burial Service, when rightly understood, to require Nonconformists, as a matter of conscience, to hold aloof from their brother Christians of the historic Church—though it is constantly alleged, as it was to the present writer, that this service alone is a sufficient reason for Nonconformity, I have now to urge this same Burial Office as one strong reason for embracing the communion which possesses and uses it.

For I respectfully submit to our separated brethren that this form of words, so much admired and so little understood even by Churchmen themselves, embalms the teaching of our LORD and His Apostles, the teaching which is preserved for us in Holy Scripture, on the subject of the INTERMEDIATE STATE; whereas the popular teaching, the almost universal teaching of Nonconformist pulpits and treatises, entirely misconceives the doctrine of the Bible, and, however unintentionally, changes and perverts the truth of God to the confusion, if not the peril, of souls.

I do not think any one will charge me with misrepresenting the teaching prevalent amongst Nonconformists,

teaching into which even some Churchmen have drifted, in spite of their own standards, if I say that it amounts to this: That the pious dead pass direct at death into glory; that they "go straight to heaven" and are "with the LORD in glory everlasting," whilst the reprobate are "in hell," suffering the penalties of the damned. "The Protestant doctrine," says the *British Weekly*, "is sufficiently expressed in the well-known words, 'The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory.'" Nor is there any doubt that this is the popular belief. The common saying, "Sudden death, sudden glory," proves it. It is unquestionably the belief of Mr. Spurgeon, who spoke not long ago of a departed minister as "now in glory." It is the language of some of our most popular hymns. Indeed, it is so firmly ingrained into the minds of many Englishmen, that it will surprise not a few of those who read these words to learn that any other view has been, or can be, maintained. They always think of their pious dead as in the "many mansions;" as "bright angels in heaven;" as "clothed in white robes with palms in their hands"—so much so that it will seem to them almost a blasphemy to doubt it.

And yet this teaching, however general, however undoubted, is distinctly and proveably untrue. It is not the teaching of the Bible. The teaching of the Bible is, what we find echoed in the Burial Office, that the dead in Christ are *not* ascended up to heaven, are *not* in glory, but are waiting, are resting, in Paradise, in "Hades," in the "Intermediate State," until the resurrection of the dead and the day of judgment, when, and not before, they shall receive the kingdom prepared for them and shall reign with Christ in glory.

But before we cite chapter and verse to prove this, two preliminary questions demand an answer. The first is this. If the Christian dead pass at death into celestial glory, then *what purpose can the resurrection of the body serve?* Why should the poor body be raised, if the soul can enjoy the glories of heaven without it? Why should

CHAP. XLIII.

that be taken up to heaven if men have already—possibly for hundreds or thousands of years—enjoyed unspeakable bliss? And yet we know that the dead in Christ are to rise. "They which are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth." The sea shall give up the dead which are in it. And not only so, but the resurrection body shall have part in the glory of heaven, for Christ "shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body." Sown in dishonour, it shall be raised in glory. And not until this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, shall the saying that is written be brought to pass, "Death is swallowed up in victory." Not until we are "clothed upon" shall "what is mortal be swallowed up of life." We may therefore fairly ask those who promise us heaven and glory at death what place there is in their scheme for the resurrection of the body. But we may also ask them a second and a still more important and crucial question, viz., "*What is the day of judgment for?*" If men have already received their recompense of reward, if they have already gone each to his own place, how can there be any real judgment awaiting the evil or the good? According to this view, they have been judged and have received their reward already. But Holy Scripture not only preaches a "resurrection both of the just and the unjust;" not only proclaims that "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of CHRIST," and that "each one of us shall give account of himself unto GOD," but it also tells us that that day will decide, or at least reveal, our destiny. Then, and not at death, will it be said to them on the right hand, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world." Not at death, but "when CHRIST who is our life shall be manifested, then shall we also with Him be manifested in glory." Not until the Chief Shepherd shall appear shall we receive the "crown of glory." The "crown of righteousness shall be given us *at that day*." It is "at the appearing of

1 Thess. iv. 16. St. John v. 28, 29. Rev. xx. 13.

Phil. iii. 21. 1 Cor. xv. 43.

Ver. 54.

2 Cor. v. 4.

Acts xxiv. 15. 2 Cor. v. 10. Rom. xiv. 12.

St. Matt. xxv. 34.

Col. iii. 4.

1 Pet. v. 4. 2 Tim. iv. 8.

JESUS CHRIST" that the trial of our faith will be "found unto praise, and glory, and honour." It is when our LORD has received His kingdom and returned that He will say to the faithful servant, "Have thou authority over ten cities." It is when the Lord cometh and reckoneth with His servants, not before, that He bids them enter into the joy of their LORD. It is clear, therefore, that the teaching of the Chapel on this subject, however popular and unquestioned, has at least two formidable difficulties to encounter at the outset; it has to explain its apparent contradiction of the two fundamental Christian verities of "the resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgment."

CHAP. XLIII.

1 Pet i. 7.

St. Luke xix. 17.

St. Matt. xxv. 19, 21.

Heb. vi. 2.

But that is not all. It is in direct conflict with two other statements of Holy Writ. In St. John iii. 13 our LORD Himself distinctly says, "No man hath ascended up to heaven." It is clear, then, that up to that date not one of the pious dead had gone to heaven—for the *man* is where his *soul* is. And as if to make this clearer still, St. Peter says that even David, the man after GOD'S own heart, "is not ascended into the heavens."[1] Does any one say that it is since CHRIST'S ascension that souls have been admitted into heaven, then we ask for Scripture proof. Such statements without proof are valueless.

Acts ii. 34.

What then does Scripture tell us as to the state of the pious dead? We must admit that the information that it affords is extremely scant and imperfect; that it does little more than whet our curiosity; but still, as far as it goes, it is decisive. Scripture tells us that they are "in Paradise;" in "Abraham's bosom," "under the altar," "resting for a little season," until the LORD comes and they are caught up into the clouds to be for ever with the LORD. And here are the passages which prove it.

1 Thess. iv. 17.

1. Our LORD said to the penitent thief: "To-day

[1] Yet Dr. Parker has just spoken of a late Presbyterian minister as "my *ascended* friend," and addresses an appeal "to the students whose ELISHA (*sic*) *has ascended*." — *British Weekly*, Nov. 22, 1889.

CHAP. XLIII.

St. Luke xxiii. 43. shalt thou be with Me *in Paradise*." Now Paradise in His lips did not mean heaven—whatever it may mean in ours. The Jews used the word of the "Intermediate State," and so the disciples would understand it. Besides, He could not mean that the dying thief should go that day to heaven, for He did not go Himself to heaven. On the contrary "He descended into hell," *i.e.*, to Hades, the invisible world. "He went and preached to the spirits in prison." He did not ascend to heaven for forty days. According to CHRIST, therefore, the pious dead are not in heaven but in Paradise.

Acts ii. 31. Ephes. iv. 9. 1 Pet. iii. 19. Acts i. 3.

St. Luke xvi. 23. 2. Our LORD speaks of Lazarus as "carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." But "Abraham's bosom" is not heaven. If we want to know what the expression means we must ask what our SAVIOUR and the Jews of His time understood by it. And about that there is no doubt.[1] They understood by the term "the Intermediate State," the place of rest and peace. Just as Dives was in Hades, not hell, so Lazarus was in Paradise, not heaven.

Rev. vi. 9. 3. The souls of the martyrs—"slain for the word of GOD"—were seen by St. John in the visions of the Apocalypse "underneath the altar." But this expression, and a similar one—"under the throne of glory," were used by the people amongst whom our LORD lived and to whom He spake, to signify *Sheol* or *Hades*, the home of disembodied souls. That these "souls underneath the altar" were not yet glorified is clear from verse 11: "It was said to them that they should rest yet for a little season until their fellow-servants . . . . should be fulfilled."

St. John xi. 11. Acts vii. 60. 1 Cor. xv. 6, 20. 1 Thess. iv. 14. 4. The pious dead are repeatedly described to us as "asleep." Is it conceivable that they would be thus described if they had already entered on the joys of the heavenly state? And, still more: is it conceivable that when comforting the Thessalonians about their Christian

[1] See, for example, Josephus's *Discourse concerning Hades*, Section 3.

dead St. Paul should have referred them to a future resurrection if he could have spoken, as men constantly speak now, of their present glory? The only consolation he has for them is this:—"Them that sleep in JESUS will GOD bring with Him," and this, "The dead in CHRIST shall rise first." But he could not possibly have spoken thus had he known that these persons were at that very time in heaven.[1]

5. And as to "the rest of the dead," we are told that our LORD, between His death and resurrection, "went and preached to the spirits in prison." In the next chapter we read that "unto this end was the gospel preached, even to the dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh," &c. St. Jude tells us that the fallen angels are "reserved in chains under darkness to the judgment of the great day." All of which Scriptures, whatever difficulties and ambiguities may beset them, teach us clearly that the present state of these imprisoned souls is *not final:* it is *intermediate;* it will be altered at the day of judgment.

1 Pet. iii. 19. Ver. 6. Ver. 6.

6. But perhaps it is urged against these views that to die is "to depart and be with CHRIST;" that to be "absent from the body" is to be "at home with the LORD." But surely it is overlooked that CHRIST, as LORD and GOD, is present in Paradise. His presence is covenanted to two or three assembled in His name; why should we think that it can or will be denied to the millions congregated there?

2 Cor. v 8.

So that Holy Scripture unquestionably contains the revelation of an Intermediate State. Of that state it tells us very little. We gather that the pious dead are "resting," "sleeping," are "at home with the LORD," are "comforted," are "in Paradise." And this is the doctrine which is reflected in the Burial Service. And because that service preserves for us the truth of GOD, and upholds it against prevailing error, it should command the respect and allegiance of Nonconformists.

Rev. vi. 11, xiv. 13. St. Luke xvi. 25.

[1] Cf. Whately, *Scripture Revelations concerning a Future State*, p. 80.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE COMMINATION SERVICE.

"When we consider that this manner of answering was originally appointed by GOD Himself, people should be cautious how they charge it with being a wicked or foolish institution."—*Wheatley.*

To the COMMINATION SERVICE, which we shall consider in this chapter, one objection, and, so far as I know, only one, is alleged. People sometimes decline to join in it because, as they say, they "do not care to take part in cursing their neighbours." It is not, as we shall see presently, a very enlightened or thoughtful remark, but as it has been heard from time to time in the House of Commons, it passes readily from lip to lip outside, and therefore it demands a brief consideration at our hands.

And, first, we remark that this objection, like others of the same stamp, really hits the Bible rather than the Prayer-Book. For if it is a valid charge against the Commination Service that it involves "cursing our neighbours," then the objection lies equally, or rather properly, against the Scripture from which that service is derived. For the Commination Service, in its essential feature, its comminations, is taken, little as many persons seem to be aware of it, straight out of the Word of GOD. There is no other service, either of Church or Chapel, which can plead anything like the same close conformity to Scripture pattern that this can. Right or wrong, there is undeniably a formal Commination Service, the exact parallel to our own, containing almost the *ipsissima verba* of the Church's service, set forth in

CHAP. XLIV

Deut. xxvii. 11-26. This service, too, had been prescribed beforehand, and we are told that it was religiously carried out by Joshua. Whatever blame, consequently, attaches to the Prayer-Book service attaches equally to the Bible service, of which it is the faithful reproduction and exact echo. So that this objection proves too much. According to it, it is the Bible that is at fault. According to it, the twelve tribes when commanded to stand, some on Mount Gerizim to bless, some on Mount Ebal to curse, should have stoutly refused, should have withstood Moses and Joshua to the face, on the ground that they did not "care to join in cursing their neighbours." If this objection is well founded, then St. Paul too, who must have imprecated a curse on some of *his* neighbours, is very much to be blamed.

Deut. xi. 29. Josh. viii. 33-35.

1 Cor. xvi. 22.

But this objection, which is thus discovered to be at issue with Holy Scripture and to arraign the wisdom and goodness of GOD, has also to settle its account with common sense. For common sense reminds us that no man *can* curse his neighbour, in the sense of bringing a curse upon him. A man may *imprecate* curses on others —we shall see presently that this service makes no pretence of doing that—but to inflict or entail a curse is beyond his power. The Merciful GOD has not delegated to any of His creatures the power to bless or curse at pleasure. As has been already remarked, all that man can do is to pronounce, or to echo, the *Divine* curse or blessing. We cannot "go beyond the word of the LORD to do either good or bad of our own mind." The history of Balaam only anticipated for a rude age what is self-evident to a reflecting mind, that no man can "curse those whom GOD hath not cursed," that "the curse causeless shall not come," and that the Divine power and might never lends itself to carry out human spite or caprice. We may be quite easy in our minds, therefore, about "cursing our neighbours." We cannot bring a curse upon them, if we try. We may heap any number of impotent curses upon them; we may invoke all manner of bodily or spiritual disasters, but the ratifi-

Numb. xxiv. 13.

Chap. xxiii. 8. Prov. xxvi. 2.

CHAP. XLIV

cation of the curse rests with GOD, and He will not do an unkind or unjust thing at our bidding. "There is no enchantment against Jacob." Bell, book, and candle cannot override the righteous will of GOD. We could not therefore hurt our neighbours by this service, even if we could be so unchristian as to desire it.

Nor do we in the Commination Service even *imprecate*, *i.e.*, pray for, curses upon others. It admits of doubt whether the Israelites in the service which GOD prescribed to them did or did not invoke curses;[1] but it admits of no doubt whether *we* do this in the Prayer Book service. We do nothing of the kind. Our language is not, "Cursed *be* he," but "Cursed *is* he." That is to say, we breathe no prayer, we express no wish that the idolater or the adulterer *may be* cursed; we merely affirm as a matter of fact that such persons do lie under GOD'S curse. Not that there would be any great harm if we did invoke GOD'S curse upon them. We should
2 Tim. iv. 14. only be asking as St. Paul does, that they might receive their just recompense of reward; only praying that GOD'S will might be done. GOD must and will reckon with evil-doers whether we approve of it or not. So long as they continue in their sin, they *are* accursed—so, the service reminds us, "the prophet David beareth witness" and such, too, is the teaching of natural religion. We cannot alter it, even if we disapprove of it. We cannot increase or diminish that curse, cannot in any way vary it; all we can do is to express our assent or dissent. If therefore the Israelites in their service said of the unjust or the unclean, "Cursed be he," they were quite right in saying it, and we should be right in saying it now. We should say no more than this: "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight." But we do not say this; we testify publicly that such and such persons *are* accursed of GOD and no more. For

[1] The formula, both in the Authorised and Revised Versions, runs, "Cursed *be* he," &c., but there is no "be" in the Hebrew, and it is a question whether the indicative "is"—"Cursed *is* he," &c.—may not rightly be supplied instead.

the "Amen" we pronounce after each curse is the Amen of affirmation, not of prayer. "Amen" simply means "verily," "truly." It is the word so often translated "Verily, verily," in the New Testament. So that it does not always signify "So be it;" its import depends on whether it follows a statement or a prayer. After the former, as, for example, after the Creeds, it signifies "Verily, *so it is.*" It is absurd to suppose that we can pray that the dogmatic statements of the Creeds *may be so;* the "Amen" or "verily" can only clench and ratify what we have just affirmed. And such is its meaning in the Commination Service. It implies assent, not entreaty; assent to the statement "Cursed *is* he," &c. The service itself explains its use: "Fleeing from such vices, for which ye *affirm with your own mouths the curse of God to be due.*"

It is clear, therefore, that we do not curse and cannot hurt our fellow-creatures in the Commination Service. It still remains for us to consider what this service means—what is its *raison d'être.*

Its primary design, as the name implies and as the preface teaches us, is to *admonish* the Church; to *warn* its members against sin and the consequences of sin. And where else, let me ask, in the English language, is this so fully and faithfully done? There is nowhere to be found a more Scriptural and Evangelical appeal to Christian men than that contained in the Exhortation. No man after hearing this can say that he was never warned, or that he did not know what he must do to be saved.

But there is an additional reason why these comminations should be recited, and it is this—the present abeyance of ecclesiastical discipline. A society which exists, as the Church does, "to make men good," is bound to deal with any openly and notoriously bad men in her communion. She cannot distinguish indeed between the wheat and the tares, but she can between the wheat and the poppies. The "wicked person" must be "put away"—must be put out of benefits until such

CHAP. XLIV.

time as he repents. Otherwise the Church of the Spotless CHRIST will seem to the world to connive at wickedness, and will be overrun with iniquity, and so will cease to be a home and school of the saints.

Now the Church in this land is confessedly sore let and hindered in exercising this godly discipline. Partly by our unhappy divisions. I have actually seen a plea advanced for Dissent on the ground that it facilitates the exercise of discipline! I submit that it makes any effectual administration of it well-nigh impossible. Of what avail is it that we put this man or that out of communion when a hundred societies, each of which claims to be a "Church," open their arms to receive him? Which of us has not known cases—Dissenters themselves complain of it—of men expelled from one sect eagerly welcomed—such is the keen competition amongst religious bodies—by another, or by three or four in succession? Moreover, in the present state of things an excommunicate person can always turn the tables on the body which has expelled him: he can always found a new Church. So far from being put to shame, that is to say, he scores a triumph. The Wesleyans, to cite one instance, attempted to enforce discipline in 1846, and the result was—another and bitterly hostile "Church"—the "Wesleyan Methodist Reformers." But another and formidable difficulty arises from the interposition of State law. The State insists on putting its own interpretation on the Church's law. The Church, for example, says that the "notorious evil liver" is to be debarred from Holy Communion. The State says that no man shall be accounted a "notorious evil liver" unless he has been convicted on a criminal charge by a civil court. So that the Church's powers are circumscribed; her exercise of discipline is limited. And the same remark applies to a large extent, be it observed, to the discipline exercised, or attempted to be exercised, by the Chapel. Any one who feels that his character is compromised by expulsion from the "Wesleyan Society" or the "New Jerusalem Church" has his remedy by legal

process, and that remedy has been put in force of late years both against the Wesleyans, the "Brethren," and the "Catholic Apostolic Church." The law will put its own interpretations on their rules as on ours. They soon discover that even in the so-called "Free Churches" the royal supremacy is not a dead letter. Hence the decay of discipline is by no means confined to the Church of England. Indeed, it may be questioned whether reproof or excommunication is not *less* likely to be exercised under the voluntary system than where a man is protected by endowments, because of the dependence of the minister. It is not in human nature to be uninfluenced by the consideration that the person to be proceeded against pays part of the stipend. Still more formidable must be the thought that the attempt to "put away the wicked person" may presently result in that and other persons putting the minister away instead. No, there can be but a sorry prospect of any effective discipline where the pastor's bread and berth are alike dependent on the will of the congregation. The Church, therefore, is not alone in this respect. Her discipline is unsatisfactory. She hopes that it may be restored. Meanwhile she does what she can (1) to warn offenders and (2) to clear herself of complicity with evil, by this solemn Commination Service. She hereby proclaims to the world that "although in the visible Church the evil be ever mingled with the good,"[1] and although she may appear to tolerate them, still they are none of hers; that though they escape excommunication, they are accursed in the sight of GOD, and a "dreadful judgment is hanging over their heads." I appeal to candid Nonconformists whether at the present day this is a service which can be lightly dispensed with.

[1] Art. XXVI.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE RITE OF CONSECRATION.

"Can we judge it a thing seemly for any man to go about the building of an house to the GOD of heaven with no other appearance than if his end were to rear up a kitchen or parlour for his own use."—*Hooker.*

PERHAPS the rite of the Church which, next to Confirmation, is most misunderstood and resented by Nonconformists, is that of CONSECRATION—the consecration, that is to say, of churches and churchyards. It has been and is still a fruitful source of contention, especially in Town Councils and Burial Boards, and it has given much occasion to the enemies of the Church to blaspheme. And yet nothing can be less superstitious, nothing more reasonable and fitting, as I hope in this chapter to prove.

But we must distinguish at the outset between the *rite* of consecration, which is a religious service, and the *act and deed* of consecration, which is a legal formality, the conveyance of the ground or building, as the case may be, for certain specific and religious purposes. Now the latter requires no apology, any more than any other conveyance, and certainly not more than the conveyance of chapels and chapel graveyards. Here, as elsewhere, it is the religious element that gives the offence; it is the *rite* of consecration is the stumbling-block. Nonconformists, or the less educated among them, have an idea that the bishop pretends, by the use of a certain form, to impart a sanctity to the building and to make the ground "holy ground."

Not long ago some workmen were engaged in removing the boundary wall of a churchyard, the stones of which were to be used in building a house. It was a standing joke amongst them whether the house would be holy or not. This is no doubt absurd, but it reveals the ideas of thousands of Englishmen on this question. The *word* "consecration" is perhaps responsible for suggesting this idea, but that it is there, and widely diffused, there can be no manner of doubt. And as men are quite clear in their own minds that no prayers, no forms, can make any difference in stones and soil, they pronounce it an effete superstition; they think it is all *hocus pocus*, and they ridicule the Church for retaining it.

And yet a moment's reflection would have taught these same persons, had they been fair and unprejudiced, that there must be a huge mistake somewhere, and probably on their part. In charity to their fellow Christians, they should have concluded that consecration somehow *could not* be what they supposed; that it *must* have some other aim and meaning, if it is, as they say (and as we allow), an obvious dictate of common sense that no rites can affect inorganic matter, and make them in the least degree different from what they were before; they should have reflected that others must know this as well as themselves. They will admit that all Churchmen are not fools; they will allow that the Church ranks amongst her members some of the shrewdest of our countrymen; possibly they will allow that no other communion at home or abroad can produce such a list of illustrious names —names distinguished alike for intellect and character. Is it conceivable that these men—Selbornes, Gladstones, Salisburys, Hatherleys, Cairnses, and the like, hard-headed lawyers, far-seeing statesmen, should have sanctioned consecration, should have served the Church and given their sons and daughters to its service, if all the while this rite outraged all the dictates of common sense. No; a very little reflection would have convinced the Nonconformist that he must some-

CHAP. XLV.

how have got a wrong idea of it into his head, and that he was condemning it only because he did not understand it.

What then *is* Consecration? It is not making the ground or the building "holy" in the *common* sense of that word; it is making them holy in the *Bible* sense of the word: it is the *solemn dedication* of them to the service of GOD, the *setting them apart* from common to sacred uses. This is all that the service can do, or pretends to do. In one word, it is consecration *according to Holy Scripture.*

For this word has not been invented by the Church: it is borrowed by the Church from the Bible. The word and the thing are alike found in Holy Writ, and therefore word and thing are appropriated by the Church, "the keeper and witness of Holy Writ."

Let us briefly see, then, what "consecration" means in the Bible. In Exod. xxxii. 29 we find Moses saying, "Consecrate yourselves unto the LORD," the meaning of which is obviously "dedicate yourselves," "devote yourselves to GOD." It cannot mean, "Make yourselves holy," for that man cannot do. In Josh. vi. 16 we read, "the vessels of brass and iron are consecrated unto the LORD," *i.e.*, "devoted," "set apart." Elsewhere we read of "a ram of consecration," "the basket of consecrations," "the seven days of consecration," "the head of his consecration," of "consecrated" oxen and sheep, and so forth. The meaning of the word in every case is this, that the ram, the contents of the basket, the oxen, the vessels, and the like, were *set apart*, were *dedicated* to GOD. And the "consecration" of the church or the cemetery means nothing more. Those who take offence at this rite are really quarrelling with Holy Scripture.

Exod. xxix. 22; Lev. viii. 22. Ver. 31. Ver. 33. Numb. vi. 9; where the margin gives the true meaning "separation." 2 Chron. xxix. 33.

But I have said that we do by this service make the church or graveyard "holy" in the Bible sense of that word. Yes, but "holy" in the Bible does not mean "good," "saintly," "spiritual;" it means that a thing or a person is *set apart* for GOD. In proof of which I

am glad to be able to refer to the work of a learned Nonconformist, Professor Beet.[1] He says the word is the "broad arrow" which marks man or thing as belonging to GOD. Only thus can we explain such expressions as "holy ointment," "holy linen coat," "holy vessels," "holy water," "holy chambers," "holy day," "holy mountain," and I may add "holy Bible;" all these things are incapable of any spiritual impress, but they can be dedicated to and belong to GOD. The paper and print of the Bible in nowise differ from other paper and print; we call it "holy Bible" because it is GOD's book. Bishop Ryle has somewhere said that the clergy, by constantly speaking of "holy Church," "holy baptism," and the like, have made the word hateful to Englishmen. If so, it can only be because Englishmen have forgotten its proper meaning.[2]

It is clear, therefore, that there is nothing superstitious in consecration: nothing that conflicts with reason or with Scripture. But the question still remains: What is the *use* of this rite at all?

Deut. xxiii. 18; 1 Kings xiv. 24, xv. 12, &c.; Gen. xxxviii. 21 22; Deut. xxiii. 18; Hos. iv. 14; Ezra x. 8.

But here again, before we enlarge on its fitness, we must remind our Nonconformist brethren that, use or no use, it is a rite which is based on Scripture precedent, a service which is borrowed from the Bible. We are only following the law and the prophets in solemnly dedicating our Churches and their contents to Almighty GOD. "Almost all things are by the law purged," or dedicated. But what is more to the purpose, the tabernacle, the first sanctuary of Israel, was consecrated. It and its contents were solemnly "anointed" by Divine command. So were Aaron and his sons, the ministers of the tabernacle. Then the temple, which replaced the

Heb. ix. 22, *cf.* ver 18.

Exod. xl. 2; Lev. viii. 10.

1 Kings viii.

[1] *Holiness as understood by the Writers of the Bible.*

[2] The word "consecrated," used in Josh. vi. 19 of the vessels of brass and iron, is in the Hebrew (as the margin tells us), "holiness." Moreover, the Hebrew word for "Sodomites" is *holy men;* and for "harlots" *holy women*, because these persons had *consecrated* themselves to Venus, and were *set apart* for her service. Men were even said to be "consecrated" when they were set apart for destruction.

CHAP. XLV.

tabernacle, was dedicated. A service just like our service of consecration was held. The second temple was also dedicated, and the "feast of dedication," held in later years to commemorate the cleansing of the temple, our LORD sanctioned by His presence. No one can deny, therefore, that in our rite of consecration we are only following Scripture precedent. Nor can any one pretend that if it was right then solemnly to set apart the house of GOD, it can be wrong or unnecessary now. The *principles* of Divine Service are the same in every age.

Ezra vi. 17.

St. John x. 22.

But even if Scripture afforded us no precedents for such services, their propriety—I might almost say their necessity—would still be evident. For as long as our nature is marked by greed and selfishness, there will be a danger lest things given to GOD should be resumed by men. "Keeping back part of the price" is not the only temptation which we have to encounter: we are in equal danger of taking the price back altogether.[1] Of the strength of this temptation, of its speciousness, no other proof need be alleged than this—that at the present time a proposal is seriously made to take the buildings and the monies solemnly given to GOD in past ages, given expressly for the purposes of CHRIST'S religion, and to devote them to secular uses, and that this proposal finds instant favour with thousands of religious people. It is clear, then, that even when protected by all the sanctions of religion, even when it has been dedicated to Him by solemn observances, the property of GOD is never safe against human covetousness. But what would it be without such protection? Consecration, if it serves no other purpose, serves this—that it marks Church and Churchyard as GOD'S. It is a religious conveyance of the property to be His possession for ever.

[1] These things the wisdom of Solomon did not account superfluous. He knew how easily that which was meant should be holy and sacred might be drawn from the use whereunto it was first provided; he knew how bold men are even to take from GOD Himself.—Hooker, V. xii. 4.

I submit therefore to Nonconformist Christians that there is "no reason wherefore churches should be the worse if, at the time when they are delivered as it were into GOD's own possession, ceremonies fit to betoken such intents and to accompany such actions be usual."[1] No, there is no reason against it, but every reason for it, unless we mean to *take them back again.*

[1] Hooker, V. xii. 1.

Part IV.

OF THE SPIRIT AND WORKING OF THE CHURCH.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE CHARGE OF INTOLERANCE.

"Every sect saith, 'O give me liberty.' But give it to him and to his power, he will not yield it to anybody else."—*Oliver Cromwell.*

We now enter upon an entirely different class of objections to the Church. Those hitherto considered have related either to the doctrines or to the rites and services of our communion. Those which we have now to examine concern her supposed spirit, her ἦθος, her attitude towards others, her preaching, her practical working, her connection with the State, and the like. They are much more difficult to deal with, partly, because the charges are more vague and general; partly, because we cannot bring them to the test of written documents; but principally, because of the proverbial difficulty of proving a negative. But I hope nevertheless to give a good account of some of them. And the accusation which I shall examine first is that of INTOLERANCE and OPPRESSION. The Church's past history is said to betray a proud and persecuting temper. Her clergy are supposed to have been always on the side of the privileged classes, and to have resisted almost every measure for the enfranchisement and advancement of the people. Her bishops are believed to have been meanly subservient to the powers that be, and bishops and curates are alleged to have been steadily opposed to civil and religious liberty. All this, and more than this, is freely said and widely believed. And it has been said so often that, from mere force of repetition, even

some Churchmen have come to think that it must be true.

But, I ask in the first place, *what if it is true?* Suppose we admit every word of this heavy indictment, what then? Then, I answer, it is an argument not against the Church but against our human nature. It only proves that Churchmen are of like passions with Dissenters and the rest of men. I ask by way of beginning: Is intolerance, is persecution even—and Christians unhappily have persecuted each other—an argument against Christianity? No doubt unbelievers may and do use it as such. We constantly find *them* charging upon our religion the faults of our corrupt nature. But Nonconformists—those for whom I write—cannot take this ground any more than Churchmen can lay the hate and bitterness which disgrace some Dissenters at the door of Christianity. No, if Churchmen have been intolerant and selfish, and some, no doubt, have been, it has not been *because* of their religion, but *in spite of* it. Precisely so, it has not been because of their Churchmanship, but in spite of it—in spite of all its precepts and prohibitions. For, whatever imperfections may attach to the Church—and, being composed of imperfect men, it cannot escape imperfection any more than the Chapel can—it is nevertheless identified with Christianity. The two must stand or fall together. Charges which really compromise the Church discredit our religion. You cannot stab the one without wounding the other. It cannot be denied that the Church receives, holds, and echoes the teachings of Christianity. Possibly, not in its most perfect form—about that we say nothing—but Christianity nevertheless. Accordingly, there is not a word in her standards, any more than in the Bible (on which those standards claim to be based) to excuse, much less to suggest, intolerance. You can no more connect persecution with the Prayer Book than with the Scripture. If there is a word to suggest it, let it be produced. No doubt there have been intolerant Churchmen, as there are truculent Nonconformists, but the Church is no more responsible

CHAP. XLVI.

for the one than Nonconformity is for the other—our *divisions* have been the fruitful cause of this ill-will. So that if we admit all that is said against the Church, all these charges against bishops and clergy, it only amounts to this—that they were human, and their human nature has sometimes got the better of their Churchmanship. Against the Church, as against religion, you have proved nothing.

But I ask, in the second place: Even if individual Churchmen, or if Churchmen generally, have been intolerant and bigoted in the past, is that any argument against the Church *now?* For Nonconformists are not asked to unite with the Churchmen of two hundred years ago, but with Churchmen as they are to-day—with Benson, Thomson, Gladstone, Selborne, Magee, Farrar, Liddon, and the like. I think it is Coleridge who somewhere tells of a schoolboy who when asked why he was kicking a Jew, replied, "Because his forefathers killed our CHRIST." I do not know that much of the opposition directed against the Church, on the ground of *past* errors and shortcomings, is much more enlightened.

But suppose we are told that it is in the very constitution of the Church; it is the necessary outcome from her doctrines and her claims to be intolerant or exclusive or Erastian, then we ask that these baleful doctrines and claims should be specified. What are they and where are they to be found? It is easy to bring a railing accusation against any and every institution, but it is not so easy to prove it.[1] We ask therefore for specific proof. We claim that people who call themselves Christians should have this much charity at least—that they should not believe evil of their brother Christians without ample evidence to prove it. And we say that there

[1] A Nonconformist writer, who for his verjuice and malignity shall be nameless, with singular *naïveté* assumes that all the faults of Churchmen are *because* of their system, but that all the errors of Dissenters are *in spite of* theirs. But he only gives us his word for it.

is no proof, absolutely none, that the Church is anyway responsible for the shortcomings of some of her children, any more than that Christianity is to be blamed for the errors and crimes of some Christians. Those writers are not few who have praised her dignity and impartiality, and have contrasted it with the narrowness and bigotry of many sectarian bodies.

The fact is, this charge of intolerance amounts to this —that Churchmen have not always been in advance of the age in which they lived: that they have shared the opinions and prejudices of their generation, opinions and prejudices which have since been discredited. This we must allow, but this is all. For it is easy enough to prove, though it is a barren and thankless task, that Nonconformists in a past age no more understood or conceded religious liberty than Churchmen did. We are forced to say this in self-defence, but it is mournfully true that intolerance is not and has not been the monopoly either of Church or Chapel. Neither can afford to throw stones at the other. It does very well of course for an election cry to represent Nonconformists as the consistent and unvarying champions of civil and religious liberty, but it can only deceive those who are ignorant of history—those for example who do not know that "Luther invoked the civil sword against the Anabaptists;" that Calvin burnt the Unitarian Servetus over a slow fire; that the Long Parliament beheaded Laud, after fining him £36,000, passed a bill for the abolition of episcopacy, and made the use of the Prayer Book in public or private a penal offence; that the Westminster Assembly condemned John Bidle to death for Unitarianism, and that intolerance has never reached so high a pitch as amongst the Independents of New England. Cromwell's words—and he was an Independent—have been already quoted. To these it may be added that he designated the Presbyterians "that insolent sect which could tolerate none but itself." It is a Dissenting historian who informs us that "the first Independents adhered to the doctrine that it was the

CHAP. XLVI.

official duty of princes and magistrates to suppress and root out all false ministries, voluntary religions, and counterfeit worship of God," and that the Presbyterians "who pleaded with tears for liberty of conscience, denied it to the first Anabaptist they met."[1] And he could not say otherwise, for history testifies that "the very men who had fled from England to gain an asylum for religious freedom were refusing the slightest toleration to any opinions but their own."[2] Never perhaps has a more meddlesome, inquisitorial *regime* been found on the face of the earth than that of the Puritans—these same Puritans who are constantly paraded before the public as the pioneers and authors of all our liberties. "It was a sin to hang garlands on a maypole, to drink to the health of a friend, to fly a hawk, to play at chess, or to read the *Faery Queene*." The weekly festival on which the Church had from its first foundation commemorated the resurrection of our LORD was fenced about with the more than Pharisaic restrictions of the ancient Sabbath. "Some had scruples about teaching the boys the rules of Latin Grammar because the names of Mars and Apollo and Bacchus were to be found in the examples." They objected to baiting bears, "not because it gave pain to the bears, but because it afforded pleasure to the spectators."[3] During the Commonwealth the observance of Christmas was forbidden by Act of Parliament.

> "Plumbroth was Popish, and mince pie—
> Oh that was flat idolatry."

It was the age of gloom and intolerance. It has been said with perfect truth that "when Mr. Bright and Mr. Chamberlain refer to their Puritan ancestors, they should remember that the latter would probably have been burned alive, and the eloquence of the former would have received a serious check by the boring of a hole through

[1] Skeats, *Free Churches*, in Curteis.
[2] Frost, *History of the United States*, in Curteis.
[3] Macaulay, *History of England*, vol. i. pp. 84, 168.

his tongue with a hot iron." But it is in America, where they were free to do as they liked, that we can best trace the working of their system. "In May 1631, at the first court of election in Massachusetts, it was ordered that no person should be admitted to the rights of a citizen who was not previously admitted as a member of one of the churches. . . . In 1650 a code of laws were drawn up for Connecticut. It began thus: 'Whosoever shall worship any other GOD but the LORD shall be put to death.'[1] In July 1651, Mr. Obadiah Holmes, a Baptist, 'was well whipt.' . . . In 1656 attention was turned to the Quakers, and by a law of Massachusetts, passed on the 14th of October in that year, it was enacted that any Quaker landing on the coast should be seized and whipped. . . . The very captains of vessels were flogged for bringing Quakers into port. And every Roman Catholic priest who returned after one expulsion was put to death."[2] Nor was this persecution confined to *New* England. In our own country, *under the Commonwealth,* hundreds of Quakers were "whipped, imprisoned, and pilloried," and the historian of the "Free Churches" allows that "their persecutors were for the most part Presbyterians and Independents."[3] Nor is this all. Intolerance—the refusal of religious liberty—is actually approved and insisted on in the writings of leading Nonconformists. Browne, the founder of the Independents, "earnestly repudiated toleration."[4] Udal actually complains that a man may live a Papist or Anabaptist for twenty years "and never be molested for it!"[5] "We acknowledge"—these are the joint words of Barrowe and Greenwood, written in 1591 — "that the prince ought to *compel* all his subjects to the hearing of GOD's Word, in the public exercises of the Church," whilst Penry had complained in 1590 that the Queen's judges "stick not to say that

[1] It was also in Connecticut that it was made a penal offence for a man to kiss his wife or child on a Sunday.
[2] Curteis, pp. 82, 83. [3] Skeats, quoted by Curteis.
[4] Curteis. [5] Fuller, *Church History*, Book IX. viii. 1.

CHAP. XLVI.

they come not to consult whether the matter be with or against the *Word* or not; but their purpose is to take the penalty of transgressions against your *laws*."[1] Nor did even so sanctified a soul as Richard Baxter rise above the atmosphere of intolerance which pervaded even a later period. "I abhor," he writes, "unlimited liberty and toleration of all, and think myself able to prove the wickedness of it." And to descend to comparatively recent times, it was Dissenters who petitioned against granting religious freedom and equality to Unitarians, whilst Bishop Green of Lincoln spoke and voted for it.[2] The conclusion from all this is irresistible, and it shall be expressed in no words of mine, but in the language of two separate historians of Independency. "The principles of civil and religious liberty," says Fletcher,[3] "had not then been investigated and acknowledged as in later times." "In the sixteenth century," says Dr. Stoughton,[4] "and far into the seventeenth, intolerance, inherited from former ages, infected more or less all religious parties."

We see, then, that in this respect there is, unhappily, not much to choose between Church and Chapel. There is this difference, it is true, that the Church for the most part has been in power, whilst Nonconformists have been in a minority. But we have observed that when the latter had the power, as under the Commonwealth and in New England, they were not slow to use it against those who presumed to "dissent" from them. The intolerance was there all the time, and there in its wildest and most fanatical form—indeed there are those who have discovered traces of it lately; it was only the opportunity was wanting. "Parker and Whitgift," says the Nonconformist historian Skeats, already quoted,

[1] Penry, Barrowe, and Greenwood were all put to death in 1593 for felony, in the indignation which the filthy and blasphemous Martin Marprelate tracts (see Fuller, ix. 7, 17) aroused in the country.

[2] Sir G. Trevelyan, *Life of C. J. Fox.*

[3] In his *History of Independency*, quoted by Curteis.

[4] *Church of the Civil Wars*, in Curteis.

"persecuted the Puritans; but if Cartwright had been in Whitgift's place he would have dealt out equal persecution to Independents and Baptists."

Nor is it only in the matter of intolerance that Church and Chapel are on all fours. Subservience to the State, *e.g.*, has been alleged against the Church. I do not think her bitterest enemies would say that this was one of her faults *now*, but this pitiable weakness appears in another form at Chapel—in the shape of subservience to the congregation. There is no difference in principle between fawning on the Prime Minister and truckling to Deacon Tozer and Deacon Jobson. It is said again that the bishops opposed the emancipation of our West Indian slaves in the House of Lords. But this, even if true, is no worse than what thousands of Congregationalist, Baptist, and Methodist pastors did in America at a much later date. No, neither Church nor Chapel has much to gain by these imputations and recriminations. There have been blots and sins on both sides, and we only play into the hands of the infidel by parading them before the world

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE CHARGE OF EXCLUSIVENESS AND ARROGANCE.

'Our alienation from them [Nonconformists], so far as it exists depends on a cause for which neither they nor we need be reproached. It is our belief that our LORD, in His infinite wisdom, founded one society and kingdom upon earth, and that the condition of things in which Christians are known, not as Christians but as disciples of some sectarian master, or of a Pontifical autocrat—nay, as followers even of Paul or Apollos—is in direct contradiction to His will. We do not deny that we and our forefathers are partly to blame for existing schisms; we do not accuse of dishonesty those who take a different view of the nature of our LORD'S kingdom; we desire to acknowledge any fruits of the Spirit which it has pleased GOD to grant to His children through ministrations not our own. But we cannot, without doing violence to the fundamental idea of the Church, as Holy Scripture presents it to us, encourage the notion that every man who has a mind to call himself a shepherd of CHRIST'S flock is thereby entitled to the pastor's honour, or qualified to do the pastor's work."—*Primary Charge of Bishop Mackarness.*

CLOSELY allied to the charge of past intolerance, so frequently, and, as we have seen, so unfairly brought against the Church, is the complaint of present EXCLUSIVENESS. It is said that the Church, which is for ever prating about unity, is herself the greatest obstacle in the way to Christian concord. It is pointed out that whilst all, or nearly all, bodies of Nonconformists can and do make common cause; whilst they agree to sink their differences, to exchange pulpits, and to join in acts of worship, the Church persistently holds herself aloof from all, regards them as intruders, and makes it no

secret that she hopes and labours for their return to her fold. It is allowed that here and there a clergyman of wide sympathies, here and there a landowner of liberal views, holds out to them the right hand of fellowship; but it is said that these are the rare exceptions which only prove the rule. It is complained that most of the clergy and many of the laity, however they may recognise the zeal and piety of Dissenters, will have no spiritual dealings with them. Now these charges, whether true or false, create, and have long created, great soreness. Perhaps more than anything else this attitude of the Church towards the Chapel accounts for the tension which exists between them. It pains Nonconformists; it wounds their self-esteem. It seems to be a direct reflection either on their piety or their intelligence. They remember almost pathetically that "we are all aiming at one place;" that "there is only one way;" that, after all, we worship the same GOD, acknowledge the same duties, and cherish the same hopes; and so they protest that they can only ascribe the Church's exclusiveness to superciliousness, to pride of place, to downright arrogance, and thus they learn to detest the system which, as they think, breeds and fosters so much bigotry.

But I submit to the candid Nonconformist that this imputation is grossly unjust. I submit to him that, so long as Churchmen believe what they do believe, and for the reasons which they think they have for believing it, they cannot do otherwise. With their convictions, it would be positive sin to do otherwise; and more, it would be an unkindness and an injustice to Dissenters themselves. Our views may be wrong—that is another matter—but so long as we honestly hold them we cannot, as honest men, act differently. This is what I now undertake to prove to those Nonconformists who need proof. Some of them, of course, are quite aware that this apparent exclusiveness is the necessary consequence of certain Church views and principles, and *they* do not blame us for it. They see that we cannot do otherwise.

CHAP. XLVII.

But they are a small minority. To most men it is all so much pride and bigotry. I submit, therefore, to such persons that the boot is on the other leg: it is we who have reason to complain of the attitude of Nonconformists, rather than they of ours.

1. It will not be denied, then, that Nonconformists have separated from the Church. Churchmen did not leave them, but they repudiated and deserted first the usages and then the fellowship of Churchmen. The very name "Nonconformist"[1] proves it, and it is a matter of history. We can give the exact date when they left us. The Romanists went out in 1570; the Independents began in 1568; the Baptists formally separated themselves on September 12, 1633;[2] the Quakers date from 1646 (or thereabouts); the Wesleyans from 1795; the "New Connexion" from 1797; the "Primitive Methodists" from 1810; the "Bible Christians" from 1815; the "Wesleyan Methodist Association" from 1835; the "Wesleyan Methodist Reformers" from 1849. It is true that some of these sects sprang not from the Church, but from another sect, but this does not affect our argument, which is that Nonconformists by their own act have separated from the Church. The Church did not expel them. It has sometimes been said that the Wesleyans, for example, were driven out, but nothing is farther from the truth. Howling mobs, unjust magistrates, persecuting clergy, if such there were, do not exclude from CHRIST'S society. No one can cite statute or canon or decree whereby this or that Nonconformist or body of Nonconformists was turned out. No, they left us of their own accord, just as individuals are constantly leaving us now. For one

[1] The name was originally given to Churchmen like Baxter, who conformed, as they said, to the *essence* of the Church, but not to its *accidents*. They said it was wrong to "collect churches," *i.e.*, to set up congregations in opposition to the Parish Church. The appropriation of the name by the sects is of comparatively recent date.

[2] Curteis, p. 212, note.

reason or other, they prefer Chapel to Church, and so to Chapel they go.

And yet, in the face of these patent facts, we are constantly blamed, as if we had left Nonconformists, instead of they us. An able writer,[1] after first suggesting that the English Church denies to Dissenters the name of Christians, then triumphantly asks what can be thought of a Church "which admits that we are Christians and yet refuses to work with us." It never occurs to him apparently that that is precisely the question which Churchmen are constantly asking about himself and others. "You admit," we may retort, "that we are Christians, and yet you must and do stand aloof from us. You allow that our communion is a Church, however imperfect, and yet you decline to unite with us in our worship. In fact, you separate from us and then straightway denounce us for our estrangement." Yes, we too want to know what can be thought of such exclusiveness. And we also want to know why the guilt of this separation must always rest on that communion which has never separated from anybody. We fail to see how the lamb can have fouled the stream. It is time that the world understood that the tables are turned; that Nonconformists have declined to worship with us, not we with them.

2. But now the question presents itself: Was it right for these Independents, these Baptists and Wesleyans, to separate from the Church? Nonconformists can only answer "Yes." To say "No" would be to condemn Dissent. You say: "They were compelled to leave the Church. Their convictions, their principles, would not permit them to remain in it. They would have sinned against their conscience had they remained." Very good! But was this no pain, let me ask, to the Churchmen of those days? Is it no pain to earnest Churchmen of to-day when A. B. or C. D. renounces the communion which they love so dearly. Is not this a

[1] Mr. R. F. Horton, Appeal to Wavering Nonconformists, p. 29.

CHAP. XLVII.

reflection upon *our* piety or our intelligence? Does it not condemn the Church at least as much as our "exclusiveness" condemns the Chapel?

Anyhow, they left us, and left us, you say, for conscientious reasons. You justify their separation from us. You say it was a duty they owed to GOD and their own souls, whatever distress it might occasion us; and we agree with you. We admit, that is to say, that if men have scruples of conscience, they must act upon them. But now we ask: Why do you deny us the liberty which you claim for yourselves? Why may not Churchmen have consciences, have principles as well as other people? Why may they not hesitate to *unite*, for work or worship, with Nonconformists, as well as Nonconformists object to *remain* for work and worship with Churchmen? Why is separation right in your case, and wrong in ours? This is a plain question, and it demands an answer.

3. For Churchmen, or many Churchmen, have convictions which make it impossible for them to unite with Dissenters. Let me briefly mention two of these. First, they "believe in *One* Catholic and Apostolic Church." They find one church and only one revealed in Holy Scripture. To them a "Wesleyan Church" or a "New Jerusalem Church" is in direct opposition to the declared will of GOD. How, then, can they recognise such "churches" without sin? They may admire the piety, the devotion, the labours of individual separatists, but if there is "one body" and no more, how can they conscientiously acknowledge a second? Again, they believe that the ministers of CHRIST must derive their commission from CHRIST'S Apostles; that they must be sent, sent by superior authority, and sent with the laying on of hands. They may be mistaken in their views, but such *are* their views, and they confidently appeal to Scripture and to antiquity in support of them. They hold that Nonconformist pastors, however admirable and exemplary, and however qualified for the ministry, and however successful, for GOD'S

grace is not tied to means and channels, have nevertheless not been commissioned in GOD's appointed way. How, then, can they recognise them as ministers of the one church without sin? And it is precisely because their uniting with Nonconformists *would* involve such recognition; because it would commit them to views which they cannot hold, that they are compelled to stand aloof. It ought to be a pain and grief to them; it is in many cases. It is a pain to hold ourselves apart from any who love our LORD, and who have so many solid claims on our respect and affection. Besides, we know full well that it will subject us at once to the imputation of pride and bigotry; and more, that it will hinder for the time the very cause of Christian reunion which we have at heart. But what else can we do, so long as we believe as we do? The convictions of Church people are at least as sacred as those of Nonconformists. The latter are constantly praised for their fidelity to their principles; why are *we* alone to be blamed for fidelity to ours? No, the candid Nonconformist will admit (what some have already admitted) that so long as our views are unchanged, we cannot act otherwise. Whatever it may cost us, whatever misconstruction, whatever suffering, whatever reproach—and the writer knows something of all this cost—we owe it to our LORD and to what we conceive to be His truth to be thus exclusive and to bear the charge of arrogance.

4. And we owe it to Nonconformists themselves. For if our principles are sound—and they have this much in their favour, that they are no novelty; they are beyond all question the views of the vast majority of Christians from the earliest ages; if our principles are sound, and naturally we should not hold them unless we thought they were—then we do a grievous wrong to those who think otherwise, if we lightly surrender them for the sake of peace or popularity. We owe it to them as our fellow Christians, and the more we esteem them the more we owe it to them, to contend earnestly through evil report and good report for "the faith once delivered

CHAP. XLVII.

to the saints." It is no kindness, it is "damnable uncharitableness," to keep back anything that is profitable unto them. We cannot help seeing that many Nonconformists *must be* in error, not because they differ from us, but because they contradict one another. As one of themselves has recently remarked, these divisions are plain proofs of error somewhere.[1] We believe, moreover, that their existence as separate communions is unscriptural. We think that in their very zeal for souls, in the prominence they have given to personal religion, they have unwittingly overlooked some teachings of Holy Writ as to corporate Christianity, as to the church and its officers and sacraments. We feel sure that if they could only divest themselves of hereditary prejudices; if they could view these vexed questions calmly and dispassionately, they might be won back to the old beliefs of Christendom. And so long as we think thus, where is our honesty, where our charity, if we hide our convictions? Why, Nonconformists themselves have taught us not to hide them, and they would justly despise us for not having the courage of our opinions; yes, and hereafter the very men who now complain of our exclusiveness will condemn us, if in deference to prevailing error or to gain a cheap popularity, we give away what is not ours and tamper with the truth of GOD.

5. But it may be objected by some: "We have left you, it is true, but we can nevertheless join with you in occasional acts of worship, whereas you always meet us with a *non possumus*. Why cannot you meet us half way?" But it is not half way, we reply. *It is all your way.* You demand from us a distinct sacrifice of principle and belief, whereas we require none from you. For example: you who believe in a multiplicity of "churches," of course find no difficulty in recognising the Anglican Church as one. But we who believe in "one body" and no more, cannot return the compliment—just because of that belief. You object to certain

[1] Professor Beet.

features in the Church; you think them unscriptural. But we think your very existence as "churches" altogether unscriptural. And it is the same with the ministry and other matters. We can only meet, in fact, on your terms. Our principles must be surrendered. And the same considerations supply an answer to a kindred charge often brought against the Church, viz., that of PROSELYTISING. I do not now refer to those mean and underhand ways by which, I fear, both Church and Chapel have sometimes tried to gain converts—these must be hateful to every true Christian—but to the legitimate efforts of Churchmen to win Dissenters. Nonconformists resent it that we should take so much trouble just to bring people into our fold. To them it is a matter of indifference whether a man, if only he is "converted," belongs to any fold at all, and they can only suppose that our anxiety is merely for the advancement of our sect. It would be so in their case. If, however, they will do us the justice to remember that we of the Church believe that our LORD has founded a society to be the home and school of souls; that this society is an essential part of His plan, and that this church or society in England can be but one, they will see that what they call "proselytising" must appear to us a part of our bounden duty and service.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE CHARGE OF SACERDOTALISM.

"How often in our ecclesiastical journals and in controversial writings are we reminded of the saying, 'Qui pauca considerat, facile pronuntiat!'"—*Dr. Döllinger.*

I QUESTION very much whether the Baptist or the Congregational Union, whether the Wesleyan or the Bible Christian Conference, has met of late years without some reference being made to the alarming increase of SACERDOTALISM (as they call it) in the English Church. Sometimes the imputation appears under the name of "priestly assumptions;" sometimes of "Romish views," of "extravagant claims," or "mediæval superstition;" but in one shape or other it is seldom wanting. And as it never fails to inflame the Protestant mind; as it is supposed by itself to constitute a sufficient reason for nonconformity, and to supply a convincing argument for disestablishment, though the charge has been glanced at already,[1] yet it seems to call for a separate and more extended notice.

Three preliminary observations may be made here.

1. If among the 27,000 clergy of the English Church there were no indiscreet or ill-regulated minds, no men of eccentric views, this would imply a perpetual miracle. It is a common and a just observation with Dissenters that "you can't make all men think alike," and yet they seem to want all the clergy of a National Church to think alike, and they resent it extremely if any think differently, at least on certain points, from themselves.

2. The Church is not compromised by the erratic or

[1] Page 164.

unsound opinions of any of her members, when those opinions conflict with her own standards. No doubt the clergy, if such there are, are compromised very seriously by their maintenance of any beliefs or practices disallowed by their own Church—in fact, their honour and honesty are at stake—but the Church cannot be said to be tainted with views which she herself has condemned or has not affirmed. She may justly claim to be judged by her formal confessions, her Liturgy and Articles—not by the shifting and uncertain beliefs of this or that class of minds. With the Chapel it is otherwise, when (as often happens) there are no trust-deeds or formularies to which to make appeal. In that case the misbeliefs of the minister *do* commit the congregation, until at least they are formally repudiated. But the Church, having her definite standards, must be judged by these, and not by any *alleged* departures from these.[1]

3. There is perhaps no doctrine of our religion which has not been at one time or other misconceived or perverted, and certainly there is none which is not liable to misconstruction and abuse; and here, as elsewhere, the rule *corruptio optimi pessima* holds good. For example, the doctrine of justification by faith alone is often perverted, as we know, into flagrant Antinomianism, the doctrine of election into fatalism, the doctrine of conversion into fanaticism. It need not surprise us, consequently, if we should find that the true doctrines, both of the ministry and of the sacraments, have been and are still greatly misunderstood.

And now, after this preface, let us ask what is meant by this charge of "Sacerdotalism." *What is it* that we are accused of holding and teaching? I submit to Nonconformists that in flinging about this firebrand they are doing some of their fellow-Christians a grievous wrong; they are using an evil-sounding word—a word the meaning of which they do not themselves understand—

[1] Any *proven* departures from the Church's standards will of course involve the censure of the tribunal before which they have been proved.

CHAP. XLVIII.

to excite prejudice against the clergy; they are causing these latter to be suspected of beliefs and practices which they would energetically repudiate. At any rate, we ask our accusers, as we have a right to ask them, to formulate their charge; to say what they mean by this damning word. The very horror with which it inspires them convinces us that they must be the victims of a gross delusion. We therefore challenge them, in the interests of religion—their religion and ours—to define the term.

It will not do to say, for example, that Sacerdotalism teaches that a minister is a sacrificing priest, the LORD'S table an altar, the Holy Supper a sacrifice. For of course we answer, Yes, but in what sense of the words? You cannot mean, or at least the instructed Nonconformist cannot mean, that the clergy who are called Sacerdotalists hold and teach that the LORD'S Supper is a sacrifice in *the popular, everyday sense of that word;* in the sense in which nine people out of ten understand it; the sense in which bulls and goats were sacrifices, and in which our LORD was a sacrifice. We cannot teach that the Eucharist is a sacrifice in *that* sense, because manifestly *there is no death;* no victim bleeds and suffers and expires. For, whatever views Sacerdotalists may take of this ordinance, it has never been held, even by the weakest and wildest of them, that CHRIST *dies again* during each prayer of consecration. So that obviously Sacerdotalism cannot mean that the Blessed Sacrament is a "sacrifice," in the *usual* sense of that word.

No, but you say, perhaps, that Sacerdotalism means that the LORD'S Supper is in some *real* sense a sacrifice, and the minister in some *real* sense a priest. Undoubtedly, but then that view is not peculiar to those whom you denounce as Sacerdotalists. I have already remarked[1] that both Richard Baxter and John Wesley, those pillars of Evangelicalism, call the Holy Communion "the Christian Sacrifice," meaning thereby that

[1] Page 207.

it takes the place of Jewish sacrifices, as memorials before GOD of the precious death of CHRIST (which, by the way, is precisely what the clergy mean by that term). But I appeal to your own language and belief. For Nonconformists hold—it is a strong point with them—that all Christians are "priests," and, apart from our Blessed LORD, the only *real* priests. But if so, why is not the clergyman one? Is he alone, of all Christians, to be excepted? They hold, again, that the Christian religion has its "sacrifices," and that these are *real* sacrifices—real just because they are spiritual. They hold that praise, for example, is a true sacrifice. But if so, then surely the Eucharist,[1] *the* praise-giving *par excellence*, may be so called. What we want to know is this: Why, if praise *is* a sacrifice—and Holy Scripture says it is—why is the highest act of praise to be denied this name? It is clear, then, that in regarding the Supper of the LORD as a real sacrifice and the minister as a real priest, we only share your own belief.

1 Pet. ii. 5; Heb. xiii. 15, 16; Rom. xii. 1; Phil. iv. 18.

But perhaps you retort that we regard the Eucharist as in some *special* sense a sacrifice, and the minister as in some *special* sense a priest. We are not concerned to deny it. We say that the Eucharist has taken the place of the sacrifices of Judaism, and that the clergy have taken the place of the priests of Judaism. But is this so very dreadful and unreasonable? Is it to derogate from the merit and grandeur either of the sacrifice or the priesthood of our gracious LORD? Why, these "priests" exist only to exalt His priesthood and to set forth His sacrifice; and we fail to see why *they* must disparage or obscure His priesthood, when the Jewish priest did not. If the Jew was furnished by GOD with memorials, tokens, pictures of the one precious and meritorious death, and if, by Divine appointment, there were also special officers, the priests, to present these on behalf of the congregation, then we want to know why Christianity

[1] "Eucharist," which is sometimes ignorantly set down as a Popish word, only means "the Thanksgiving." It is the word used in St. Matt. xxvi. 26, 27; St. Luke xxii. 17, 19; 1 Cor. xi. 24, &c.

CHAP. XLVIII.

may not have the same? The *principles* of Divine service cannot have changed. If Sacerdotalism, that is to say, was an integral and recognised part of the older dispensation, why is a *modified* Sacerdotalism—a Sacerdotalism which is limited to the showing of the memorials of CHRIST'S sacrifice, by certain officers of the congregation, as the *organs* of the congregation—why is this to be denounced as so dangerous? To us it seems natural to expect that there will be a *continuity* in GOD'S dealings with mankind. We are told that the Old Testament came from GOD; that it was a revelation of His mind and will; and yet we are required to believe that rites and offices which hold a prominent place in the older dispensation can have no successors or representatives in the New Covenant;[1] that a Sacerdotalism which was once innocent and helpful has, now that it is explained and adjusted, somehow become a standing peril to souls. It must surely be forgotten by those who raise this hue and cry against Sacerdotalism that a sacerdotal system has been ordained of GOD.

And here it must be distinctly understood that the instructed Churchman holds the priesthood of the laity, of all baptized Christians, no less than the Nonconformist does. We too believe that all Christians are priests: we could hardly do otherwise in the face of such texts as 1 Pet. ii. 9 and Rev. i. 6. And this view is held and strenuously advocated by the most advanced Churchmen. I may refer to Dr. Liddon,[2] to Mr. Gore,[3] and to Bishop Webb.[4] But that does not prevent our recognising a special order of priests among Christians. The Jewish people was a "kingdom of priests," so that every Jew was a priest; but it had its order of priests

Exod. xix. 6.

[1] It is sometimes objected that the term ἱερεύς, *sacrificing priest*, is nowhere used in the New Testament of CHRIST'S ministers. But the answer is obvious, viz., that the word could not be used of them; it then had a different meaning. The legal priests were still existing, and the word ἱερεῖς could only be taken to refer to them.

[2] *University Sermons*, Second Series, p. 198, quoted in Gore.

[3] *Ministry of the Christian Church*, pp. 83–88.

[4] *The Minister of the True Tabernacle*, Introduction, xxvii. *sqq.*

none the less.[1] *That* general priesthood did not exclude a ministerial priesthood; then why should it do so now? For the priesthood of the clergy is ministerial and not vicarious. It differs from that of the laity, not in kind but in function. All members of the "one body," clergy and laity, are priests, but "all members have not the same office." As in the natural body, so in the "body of CHRIST," every member is not the hand or the tongue. All that is claimed for the clergy is that among the priestly members of CHRIST they are the tongue—to teach and bless and consecrate; they are the hand—to offer and break and distribute. No, we do not say that other Christians are not priests; we only say that they are not ministers;[2] and surely Nonconformists say the same.

Rom. xii. 4; 2 Cor. xii. 15.

But perhaps you object that the danger of Sacerdotalism, even when thus defined and limited, is that it puts a man, the minister, between the soul and GOD. But we have already seen that something or somebody always *does* come between the soul and its Creator.[3] The Chapel minister, alike in his prayers and preaching, comes between your soul and GOD. Sometimes he shapes your heart's devotions—for you pray in his words; sometimes he brings you a message from GOD. Indeed, it may reasonably be questioned whether the clergy who use a *form* of prayer come between GOD and the congregation to anything like the same extent as those who pray extempore. The influence, the personality, of the man is obviously much more conspicuous and much more felt in the latter case than in the former. You cannot help thinking of him. His manner, his tricks of speech, perhaps his eloquence, all force themselves on your attention. Your devotions for the time being depend almost entirely upon his ideas, his fervour, his way of putting things. Yes, in a very real, and some-

[1] "St. Peter (1 Pet. ii. 9) is quoting and St. John is referring (Rev. i. 6) to the words in Exodus."—Gore, p. 87.

[2] See Gore, p. 86.

[3] See above, p. 168.

CHAP. XLVIII.

times, it will be allowed, in a very unsatisfactory way, does this man, your minister, stand between you and your Maker. You cannot prevent it; it must be so, for GOD works by means.

But perhaps you tell us that the clergy who are called Sacerdotalists not only come between GOD and the soul, as every minister must do, but that they come between in *such a way as to hide God from the soul.* Perhaps you think it the unhappy and perilous consequence of this system that it obtrudes *the man* upon the view of the worshippers and shuts out the vision of GOD. Of course, if Sacerdotalism did this, it would stand self-condemned. But I say unhesitatingly that, whatever the "views" of the clergy, *this cannot be done at Church*, not even at the most advanced Church; and I also say that it may be done, and unhappily sometimes *is* done, at the Chapel. I say this not for the purpose of reflecting on the Chapel, but because it is necessary to show where the danger of preaching ourselves and not CHRIST JESUS as LORD really lies.

2 Cor. iv. 5.

I repeat that "the priest," even at St. Alban's, Holborn, or St. Mary's, Cardiff, cannot, even if he would, and however he manipulates the ritual, he cannot shut out GOD and His CHRIST from the view of the congregation. He cannot, because the Book of Common Prayer would straightway confront him and flatly contradict him, if he attempted it. It is surely forgotten that the "priest" cannot, as the "evangelist" or the "pastor" can, evolve a service out of his own consciousness. He is tied down to a form of words—he has promised to "use the Form in the said Book prescribed and none other"—and those words compel him to preach CHRIST and not himself. I suppose it will be allowed that the specially "priestly" functions are those of absolution, benediction, and consecration of the elements. It is round these centres that Sacerdotalism is supposed to cluster. But a moment's examination of our services will convince the severest critic that it is beyond the ingenuity of man to keep to the Church's words and yet to hide

CHRIST behind himself. What are the *formulae* of absolution: "Almighty GOD . . . HE pardoneth and absolveth," &c. "Almighty GOD . . . pardon and deliver you from all your sins." "Our LORD JESUS CHRIST . . . forgive thee thine offences."[1] There is no hiding GOD or His CHRIST from view here. And as little is there in the forms of benediction: "The peace of GOD . . . keep your hearts and minds." "The LORD bless thee and keep thee." "GOD the Father, GOD the Son, and GOD the Holy Ghost, bless, preserve, and keep you." Nor is this possible in the Prayer of Consecration. That, like the rest of the Communion Office, is full of CHRIST; indeed, it does little more than recite before GOD the story of the "precious death" and the institution of this rite as a "perpetual memory" of the same. The priest never mentions himself (except in the exhortations) as separate from the congregation. With them he shares the confession, "the comfortable words," the Trisagion, the prayer of humble access, and the like. He proclaims himself a sinner like themselves; how can he, do what he will, put himself in the place of the Saviour? It is not denied that the party designated as Sacerdotalists do, in every possible way, dignify and exalt this service; but why? It is to exalt and honour CHRIST. It is because they believe that CHRIST is really present. So far are they from any idea of hiding Him from view, that they preach a real objective presence of CHRIST in the elements. If, therefore, they are chargeable with error in this matter, it is clearly not the error of hiding the Cross and Passion of our LORD behind their own office or personality; it is the error of making too much of His presence or of connecting it too directly with the sacrament of His death. And the more sacerdotalist they are, the less likely are they to have one thought of obtruding themselves and obscuring their LORD.

No; do what he will, the "ritualistic priest" can only make this service speak of CHRIST—CHRIST'S command, His death, His presence, His body and blood.[2] English

[1] See above, pp. 246–248.

[2] See page 211.

CHAP. XLVIII.

Churchmen—yes, and English Nonconformists—need not fear this thing called Sacerdotalism so long as our services remain what they are. They must be entirely re-written if the priest is to be the means of hiding GOD from the soul or putting himself in the place of the Crucified.[1] It is at the Chapel, I repeat, that there is a danger, and a very real danger, of doing this.

For no impartial person can fail to see, that though the clergy undoubtedly hold higher sacramental views and make more of their office than Nonconformist ministers, yet the latter count for a great deal more with the congregation than the former, and they *must* obtrude their personality in a way in which the former cannot. When the minister *makes* the whole service—prayer, sermon, and everything except the hymns and a brief lesson—there is a real danger of hiding CHRIST. If the minister can forget or efface himself—a most difficult thing to do—the congregation cannot lose sight of him. His prayer becomes a subject of criticism no less than his preaching. And *his* eloquent periods, *his* profound thoughts, *his* flights of fancy, *his* elevated diction, these are the great features of the service, and these things may easily come between the soul and GOD. They may, and no doubt they sometimes do, carry the soul to GOD, but as often as not, it is to be feared, they do exactly the reverse; they make you think of the man, and not of his Maker. To some Churchmen, the exaggerated

[1] I gratefully record that all this is fully realised by some Nonconformists. The Rev. E. White writes thus: "They know little of genuine Popery who charge its [the English Church's] constitution with semi-Romanism. . . . She has taken away, at least in intention, the doctrine of transubstantiation and the sacrifice of the mass, and the priests who are trying to restore them are nothing better than perjured traitors. She has set aside the false doctrine of Mediation, and plainly taught the truth on the Deity, the atonement and intercession of CHRIST. She has put away auricular confessions, penances, indulgences, and the correlated delusions of purgatory and intercessions for the dead; and if these delusions are now upheld by some, it is in defiance of the plainest teachings and instructions. . . . This is not semi-Romanism. It is Protestantism, and the English people know it, and intend to preserve it."

importance attached by Nonconformists to *eloquence* in worship appears to constitute a real danger to religion. It seems to us a sort of man-worship. And may I suggest here—what never seems to occur to Nonconformist newspapers—that this very man-worship is one fruitful cause of that leakage to the Church which they so often deplore, and which they generally ascribe to such unworthy motives. Cultured and devout souls want to get away from the man; they feel his very eloquence is an impertinence in the presence of the Eternal; they feel that it stands in the way of their communion with GOD. Like Diogenes, all they desire of him is that he should efface himself and not interpose between them and the Light. They have discovered that "new presbyter" is but "old priest writ large," and that if Sacerdotalism means the ministers coming between GOD and the soul, there is necessarily more of that in the Chapel than in the Church.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE CHARGE OF CORRUPTING THE GOSPEL.

"I find more profit in sermons on either good tempers or good works than in what are vulgarly called 'Gospel Sermons.' The term has now become a mere cant word; I wish none of our Society would use it. Let but a pert, self-sufficient animal, that hath neither sense nor grace, bawl out something about CHRIST or His blood, or justification by faith, and his hearers cry out, 'What a fine Gospel Sermon!'"—*John Wesley* (*in* 1778).

PERHAPS the most serious of all charges made against the Church, or rather against the ministers of the Church, is that of religious ignorance and unspirituality. It is said, not perhaps by educated Dissenters, but by the uneducated mass, that the clergy, or many of them, do not "preach the gospel," and, in fact, do not know what it is; that they are for the most part "blind leaders of the blind;" that they are "destroying more souls than they save;" that they are often "carnal and unconverted men," &c., &c. It is obvious that a more damning indictment could hardly be brought against us, because (1) it is principally for the preaching of the gospel that the Church exists; because (2) the clergy are appointed and maintained for the express purpose, among others, of preaching the gospel; because (3) if they do not know and believe the gospel they cannot be saved; because (4) if they "preach another gospel," then, though they were angels from heaven, they are under a fearful curse. So that it becomes necessary for our own sakes, quite apart from the defence and confirmation of the Church,

St. Mark xvi. 15.

1 Cor. ix. 16.

Ver. 16; comp. i. 15.

Gal. i. 8, 9.

that we should consider whether this charge is true. I propose, therefore, to devote this chapter to these two questions: First, "What is the pure gospel?" Second, "When and where is it preached?"

But first we may take, I think, some little consolation to ourselves from observing that those of our brethren who bring this railing accusation against us—as if to proclaim to the world how little *any* Christian teachers are to be trusted; for if, as they affirm, many thousands of the most educated clergy in the world are in the dark as to the very fundamentals of Christianity, what can we expect of the "unlearned and unstable?"—they are not agreed among themselves as to what "the gospel" is. There are few words that have been more prostituted and abused than this. This is a name

> "Defamed by every charlatan,
> And soiled by all ignoble use."

Gospel preaching has at various times been identified with "the heroic insistence on eternal torment;"[1] with the "five points" of Calvinism; with the "strong meat" of the Particular Baptists; with the doctrines of *ecstatic* conversion and assurance.[2] Even now "gospel" is a synonym with many Dissenters for a few hard and narrow dogmas—the dogmas which alone, according to them, make up "the plan of salvation." And we may also console ourselves with the recollection that so great an authority as Mr. Spurgeon has at length borne witness to our orthodoxy—at least in this particular. He has admitted that the gospel *is* preached at church—more,

[1] *John Ward, Preacher*, may be in some respects an exaggeration, but the teaching it reprobates was that of Thomas Boston in *The Fourfold State*, of President Edwards, of Dr. Payson and others.

[2] "Jimmy of the Round House [the Rev. James Sherman of the Surrey Chapel] never preached a gospel sermon in his life!" So said his neighbour, the Rev. J. Wells, of the Surrey Tabernacle. It is comforting to observe that this charge has been impartially made against Chapel as well as Church.

CHAP. XLIX.

he says, than in many chapels. Dr. Dunckley, too, one of the sturdiest of Nonconformists, writes: "It was then"—he is speaking of seventy years ago—"a common complaint that the gospel was not preached at Church. . . . This state of things seems to belong to a past age. *It is now almost reversed.* No man can now say," he adds, "that the Church starves the soul." It is pretty clear, consequently, that Nonconformists are not agreed either as to what the gospel is, or that the Church is guilty of mutilating or suppressing it.

But let us bring this question to a conclusive test. "To the word and to the testimony!" For the Scriptures are themselves clear and decided as to what is and what is not the gospel. The word occurs in one connection or another about a hundred times in the New Testament; surely it should not be difficult to discover its meaning. What then *is* the gospel, not according to Mr. Wells or Mr. Sherman, or bishop or archbishop, but according to the inspired writers of the Word of GOD?

Now, we are met at the outset with the significant fact that about *one half* of the New Testament consists of four "Gospels." Four out of its eight or nine writers, that is to say, have put down for us at length their ideas of "the gospel." One of them, St. Mark, commences his narrative thus: "*The beginning of the gospel* of JESUS CHRIST, the Son of GOD." What then have they written down as the gospel? What is the gospel "according to St. Matthew?" What is it "according to" St. Mark's and St. Luke's view of it? It is the story, the biography of JESUS CHRIST. It is the simple unvarnished history of His birth and growth, His miracles and parables, His life, death, and resurrection. It is a narrative of facts, not a chain of doctrines, not a theological system or "a plan of salvation." Facts, hard historical facts, this is the gospel according to the Synoptic Evangelists. Such, too, is the gospel "according to St. John." True, he deals more with our LORD'S discourses, and more with His life and work in Judæa,

but still the conception of the gospel is the same. It is still the story of our CHRIST; still a history of His ministry. The gospel of *the gospel writers*, that is to say, was gospel history. I ask attention to this, for, curiously, this is a conception of the gospel which has vanished from the minds of thousands of Christians—of those very Christians who have arrogated to themselves the name of "Evangelicals" (*i.e.*, Gospel-Christians). The idea which one half of the New Testament affords of CHRIST'S gospel is lost upon them—so much so that they would deny the name of "gospel preaching" to any mere narrative of our Saviour's ministry. *Their* gospel begins with the fall of man. They say themselves that "All have sinned" is the "A," the beginning of the gospel of JESUS CHRIST, and those who think otherwise are not evangelical. May we not plead in our defence, that a narrative, a short history of the life and work and teaching of our Holy Master, is at any rate "the gospel" according to St. Matthew, and "the gospel" according to St. Mark, St. Luke and St. John?

But let us now proceed to ask, "What is the gospel" according to St. Paul? For not only is St. Paul the author of one-fourth of the New Testament, but he had his ideas, his version of the gospel, direct from heaven. He tells us himself that the gospel which was preached of him was no gospel "after man;" he "neither received it of man, neither was he taught it" by man; he was taught it "by the revelation of JESUS CHRIST." What then was his conception of the gospel? Let us turn to the first of his Epistles. In Rom. i. 1 he writes that he was "separated unto the gospel of GOD." Then he tells us what this gospel was. It was "concerning His Son JESUS CHRIST." Not concerning human depravity, or justification by faith, or election or assurance, but concerning the person and work of our LORD. He mentions in this passage, it is true, only two facts in our LORD'S history—His incarnation and His resurrection; but he mentions these as the Alpha and Omega, as including all the life that lies between. (He does the same in 2 Tim.

Gal. i. 11, 12.

Comp. 1 Cor. xi. 23

Ver. 2.

CHAP. XLIX.

ii. 8, "Remember that JESUS CHRIST, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead, according to my gospel.") Just as the whole alphabet is comprised within these two letters, so does the whole gospel story lie between the Annunciation and the Ascension. The "pure gospel," that is to say, is purely about CHRIST, and presents to us the whole life of CHRIST. Let us pass to his next Epistle. In 1 Cor. xv. 1 he declares to the Corinthian church what was the gospel he had preached unto them, and which they had received as gospel; and what is it? "That CHRIST died for our sins . . . and that He was buried, and that He rose again . . . and that He was seen," &c. It is still "concerning . . . CHRIST," and still a series of facts. But now let us turn from his epistles to his addresses. We have a sermon of his recorded in Acts xiii. Of course it will exhibit his idea of the gospel—St. Paul could give his hearers nothing less. Indeed, he says in verse 32 that he is then and there preaching the gospel: "We bring you good tidings (*i.e.*, the gospel, the same word) of the promise," &c., and this gospel is—the resurrection of our LORD. And what else did he preach about? Was it the secret decrees of GOD, or instantaneous conversion, or "the great change"? On the contrary, this gospel sermon was a narrative of facts, of Jewish history, of Christian history. We do not deny that he drew inferences, or founded doctrines upon these facts; of course he did, and we must do the same—the doctrines, *e.g.*, of forgiveness, of justification by grace, &c. But the point is that his preaching was the preaching of a Person, of a life and a death and a resurrection. So in his speech before Agrippa, he tells us what it was he "witnessed" or preached "both to small and great." It was "that CHRIST should suffer, and that . . . He should rise from the dead," &c. Such was "the gospel according to St. Paul." Always historical facts, and facts about "one JESUS who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive."

Ver. 33.

Ver. 38.

Ver. 39.

Acts xxvi. 22, 23.

Comp. chap. i. 22; iv. 33; ix. 20.

Acts xxv. 19.

But there is yet another New Testament writer whose

ideas of gospel preaching are recorded for us—I mean St. Peter, "the first" of the apostles. It is practically *his* gospel, indeed, which we have in that which bears the name of St. Mark, for St. Mark was little more than "the interpreter of Peter."[1] But if any one still doubts what "the gospel according to St. Peter" was, let us turn to his sermons, some of which are recorded in the Acts. Two of them were spoken on special and indeed unique occasions: each, *i.e.*, was connected with the coming of the Holy Ghost. His first sermon was spoken when the Spirit of GOD fell upon the Jews; his second when the same Spirit descended on the Gentiles. Surely, if ever we may hope to hear the voice of inspiration, it will be in these addresses. He who then spoke was "filled with the Holy Ghost." What then was St. Peter's preaching like? Was it anything like what passes for gospel preaching now? Has it the true evangelical ring about it? Does it set forth in due order "the three R's: Ruin by the fall, Redemption by CHRIST, Regeneration by the Spirit," &c.? On the contrary, it was in every case a recital of certain historic facts, the facts of the life, death, and resurrection of the LORD. There is no trace of the so-called "Evangelical system"—election, justification, sanctification, &c.—in either of them, or in his addresses. No, they are all so destitute of what is commonly known as "saving truth," that if they were now preached in many a chapel, the preacher would be set down at once as an "unconverted man," as "destitute of a saving interest in CHRIST," &c. And yet this was the gospel according to St. Peter—this, and not the "three R's;" this, and not the "Gospel A B C."

Acts. ii. 14-37. Chap. x. 34-44. Chap. ii. 4.

We have seen then *what the gospel is* according to all the New Testament writers who mention the gospel at all.[2] Now let us ask, "*When and where* is this Bible gospel preached?"

[1] So Papias, Tertullian, and St. Jerome.

[2] The word is not found in either St. James's or St. Jude's Epistles.

CHAP. XLIX.

The "pure gospel" is never preached in the pulpit—never! Not by a Wesley or a Whitefield, not by Romaine or Rutherford, not by Moody or Sankey. For the "pure gospel" is the gospel story, and the pulpit is not meant and is not used for mere narrative; it is used for exposition, exhortation, &c. Never the pure gospel in any pulpit—always, at the best, man's comments on the gospel, or man's inferences from it.

But the pure gospel *is* preached at the Lectern when "*the* gospel according to" an evangelist or apostle is read. It *is* preached at the holy table when the holy gospel is heard in the Communion Office. It *is* preached in the painted window where the Man of Sorrows is seen hanging on the accursed tree. It *is* preached in the sacrament of love, where the LORD'S death is showed until He come.

1 Cor. xi. 26.

Now, then, we shall understand whether Church or Chapel preaches this pure gospel most. *Which reads the most Scripture*, whether of gospel story in the New Testament or of gospel shadow in the Old? Which furnishes the more pictures of the precious life and death, whether in storied glass or sacred emblems?

See Note on next page.

It is a curious circumstance that those who are loudest in accusing us of not preaching the gospel are precisely those who never preach it by any chance—who read little or no Scripture, and who scorn the teaching of symbols. Not long ago at a famous City chapel the eloquent minister read *seven* verses of holy writ, and then discoursed *de omnibus rebus* for an hour and a quarter! Here was "a ha'porth of bread and five gallons of sack!" The Salvation Army boasts, I believe, of its pure gospel, but its officers have been known to *apologise* for reading the gospel according to Holy Scripture. *Man's* gospel, the good news of his experiences, emotions, ecstasies—this is what the audience was impatiently waiting for, not CHRIST'S gospel, not the story of the peerless life and death. So that "another gospel which is not another" is extensively preached amongst us. Not "an angel from heaven," but one who trans-

forms himself into an angel of light, has succeeded in persuading Christians that the old historic gospel is not spiritual, not searching enough. No wonder that we who think otherwise are all in the dark and are charged with depraving the gospel of CHRIST. But let posterity, let GOD Himself judge between us!

> "I know that yonder Pharisee
> Thanks GOD that he is not like me:
> In my humiliation dressed,
> I only stand and beat my breast,
> And pray for human charity."

Note. "To make the preaching of the gospel consist exclusively in the delivery of sermons is the fatal mistake of Presbyterianism. . . . The Apostles' and Nicene Creeds are full of the gospel. There is more of CHRIST in the *Te Deum* and the Litany alone than is commonly found in two Presbyterian services. All these services, confession, supplication, thanksgiving creed, psalm and sacrament, are preaching the gospel, and to ears attuned to them and hearts in sympathy are preaching it with a tenderness, a pathos, a power, which is not so often found in the elaborate Sunday morning sermon."—Prof. Hopkins, of Auburn, N.Y., in the *Presbyterian Review.*

CHAPTER L.

THE CHURCH AS BY LAW ESTABLISHED—PART I.

"Wherever there is power in the universe that power is the property of GOD, the King of that universe—His property of right, however for a time withholden or abused. . . . Whenever we turn away our face from GOD in our conduct, we are living atheistically."—*Mr. Gladstone.*

IN discussing the relations which exist between the Church and the State in this country, those relations which are commonly expressed by the phrase "the Established Church," it is essential to remember that the question, and the only question, which we have to consider here is this—whether these relations, this so-called "establishment of religion," is such, so pernicious, so unchristian, as to require Nonconformists as a matter of conscience to hold aloof from the Church; whether our miserable divisions which make us a derision to the world and which paralyse our energies must nevertheless be perpetuated so long as the Church maintains her present connection with the powers that be. We have *not* to consider whether such "establishment" is on the whole expedient or not, nor yet whether it involves some difficulties and anomalies—that would require a treatise, and such treatises exist already—but merely this, whether it is wrong in principle; whether it is, as it is constantly alleged to be, immoral and adulterous, dishonouring to GOD, and destructive of true religion. It is no part of my present task to show to Nonconformists that the union of Church and State is, or might easily be made,

advantageous for both parties; that the proper thing is to mend, not end, their relations—though that is certainly my private opinion; all I shall attempt to prove is that there is nothing either in the recognition of the Church by the State, or in the so-called "patronage and control" at present exercised by the latter over the former, or in the "endowment" of the former by the latter—supposing such endowment to have taken place, which I do not believe—nothing so evil, so unhallowed as to require Nonconformists *in foro conscientiae*, to persevere in their Nonconformity. In the present and in a succeeding chapter we shall lay down certain principles which will, I hope, meet "the religious argument" advanced in the widely-circulated and well-known "Case for Disestablishment," and other similar works.

I submit, then, that the following propositions cannot be gainsaid:—

1. *The State, the body politic, is God's institution as well as the Church, the body mystical.* The reader of Liberationist — indeed I might say Nonconformist — literature, would almost think that the State was the creature of the devil! It is identified with "the world," and so regarded as wholly and necessarily evil, whereas the nation and the government of the nation, whatever evils may have crept into either—and churches are not free from these—is God's own ordinance and appointment. Man is by constitution a social and gregarious being. The division of mankind into "nations, peoples, and languages" is a part of the divine plan, just as much as the division into families. Why, what is the Old Testament but the history of the *making and governing of a nation?* Take this idea out of the Bible, and you leave it a "lacerated and bleeding mass." But not only has our Creator willed that men should be collected into communities; He has also ordained that these communities should have their "authorities" and governments. "The powers that be are ordained of God." The officers of the State are as much "the ministers of God" as the officers of the Church. The "divine right of

1 Tim. ii. 2. Rom. xiii. 4, 6.

CHAP. L.

kings" may possibly be on the same level with the divine right of policemen, but this much is certain, that both kings and policemen exist and act by GOD's decree, "There is no power but of GOD." And therefore the laws and ordinances of the State, like those of the Church, have GOD's sanction; they are ratified in heaven, when they do not contradict the laws of heaven. It is constantly assumed, and even by some Churchmen, that the Church is purely spiritual and the State purely secular—that GOD has everything to do with the former, and nothing with the latter; but where, let us ask, is this "godless theory" [1] countenanced in Holy Writ? *Christianity knows of no distinction between things sacred and things secular*—that is altogether of human manufacture. Our religion teaches that everything belongs to GOD, and is to be claimed for GOD. CHRIST's apostle insists that "whether we eat or drink or whatsoever we do," we are to "do all for the glory of GOD." If, therefore, the State is—and it is—GOD's ordinance, and the ruler is—as he is—"GOD's minister," then why must we make this sharp distinction between the two estates? why must he or it ignore GOD or GOD's Church? Or if religion is to govern, as Nonconformists will allow that it is, all the acts of the individual, then why may it not direct and control the community, *i.e.*, these same individuals collectively, and the government of the community, *i.e.*, these same individuals in council and legislation? No, we want a plain answer to these two questions. 1. If the State is of GOD and the Church is of GOD, why must there be no commerce or union between them? 2. If religion is to permeate all our life, why must it be excluded from our corporate life, from the life and regimen of the nation?

Rom. xiii. 1–6; Tit. iii. 1; 1 Pet. ii. 13. St. Matt. xviii. 18.

1 Cor. x. 31.

And these two considerations—first, that the State is GOD's institution and its rulers GOD's ministers, and secondly, that Christianity repudiates all distinction between things sacred and things secular—by themselves undermine many Liberationist positions. For example:

[1] See Canon Ashwell's *Lent Lectures on the Church.*

we are reproached with having State-made prayers, and State-appointed ordinances and officers. Of course we may and do reply that this is simply untrue; that neither our prayers nor our ordinances are State-made. (If they are, then our opponents will no doubt be able to tell us when they were made, in what reign, and by what Act of the legislature?) But we may take up other grounds. Suppose we do owe some of our prayers to the Parliament, what of that? They are allowed to be uncommonly good prayers. It would only mean that a Christian State had contributed to the devotions of the Christian Church. We shall be reminded that there are Jews and infidels in Parliament, but no one pretends that Jews or infidels have ever made or assisted in making our prayers, and if they had, would that vitiate them? Would they become *ipso facto* unfit for Christian use? Does Christianity then owe no psalms and prayers to Jews already? If, therefore, our prayers or creeds came to us from Parliament—which they assuredly do not—why should we not thankfully use them, being what they are, when we remember that the State is from GOD, and should be for GOD, as much as the Church.

And what if the Church's officers were State-appointed; what if our Bishops *are* nominated by the Prime Minister, and what if that minister should be, let us say—Mr. Bradlaugh! Of course it would be a shock and humiliation for Churchmen, and would greatly strain the relations between Church and State, if indeed it did not snap them. But it is to be remembered nevertheless (1) that Annas and Caiaphas, though appointed by the Roman power or its delegate, were recognised as GOD's high priests by our LORD Himself or His apostle. (2) That even Mr. Bradlaugh, *qua* Prime Minister, would be "the minister of GOD," just as the flagitious Ananias and the contemptible Caiaphas were the priests of GOD; just as the infamous Tiberius was the minister of GOD. GOD does not allow any man to hold office, except as His delegate, and as responsible to Him. (3) That no statesman can *make* a bishop, or even a humble deacon—only the

St. Matt. xxvi. 45; St. John xi. 51. Acts xxiii. 5. Rom. xiii. 6, 7.

CHAP. I.

Church's officers can do that—any more than he can make an honest man; all he can do is to choose from a number of fit men one of the fittest for the post. (4) That Prime Ministers in these matters are only the organs of public opinion—of a public opinion, too, which is controlled by Christianity. (5) That appointment by the Prime Minister, however unsatisfactory it may be in theory, has worked well in practice—it has given us the very best men for our bishops. It was a Presbyterian, the late Norman Macleod, who said that nowhere could you find forty such Christians, scholars, and gentlemen as the bishops of the English Church. And we think the plan is at least as sensible, as dignified, and as Christian as appointment, say, by the deacons, or the one opulent deacon, or the "church members" after a series of trial sermons. (6) Liberationist writings are largely made up of forebodings of what *may* happen. But Mr. Bradlaugh is not yet Prime Minister, and never will be. Till such an affliction overtakes the Church, we think it better to bear the ills we have than fly to others that we know not of. Why cross the bridge before we come to it? The spectre of Mr. Bradlaugh, *et id genus omne*, therefore, need not at present frighten Nonconformists. Besides, many of them are quite willing and even anxious that he should frame their laws; why cannot they trust him to designate a clergyman—no more—for this parish or for that see?

2. *The union of Church and State cannot be in itself immoral, for that union has been made by God.* It is most awkward for the Liberationist that a State Church —which indeed was nothing else than the one old Church of GOD in the ages before Christ came, the so-called "Jewish Church"—is exhibited to us from beginning to end of the Old Testament. "There was an established religion among the Jews," says the author of "The Case for Disestablishment," "but it was *established by God.*" Very good; that is all we want. If religion has once been "established by GOD Himself," then clearly establishment cannot be wrong *per se*. It is no

answer to this to say that "it was not so much a State Church as a Church State." So much the worse for the Liberationist argument. This can only mean that the Church, which we are now told has nothing whatever to do with the State, as such, in those days completely overshadowed the State and absorbed it. It is a strange argument against *any* connection between Church and State to plead that the connection between Hebrew State and Jewish Church was so *very, very close!* Nor is it any answer to say that "the precepts and principles, the ritual and worship" of that State religion were of Divine appointment. Are then "the precepts and principles, the ritual and worship" of the same Church after CHRIST *not* of Divine appointment? Is Christianity less Divine than Judaism was? If it is intended, as it probably is, that every detail of the Jews' religion was prescribed by GOD, so that there was no place left for any State interference, we answer, first, that this was not the case. Every tiro knows that both additions were made to its worship and variations made in its ritual. The Feasts of Purim and Dedication, for example, were not divinely prescribed. And secondly, we ask whether both David and Solomon, as sovereigns, had nothing to do with the erection, ordering, and consecration of the great sanctuary of the Hebrew nation; whether Solomon did not depose the High Priest Abiathar; and whether Hezekiah and Josiah did not, each as head of the State, undertake the reformation of the Church of his day. The Liberation Society has the hardihood to deny that the Old Testament affords any precedent for "State patronage and control" of religion. Then will they tell us plainly whether they would approve of Christian princes or their deputies doing what these Jewish monarchs did? Is not the interference of the State officials in the ordering of the Church in the teeth of all their principles? If Liberationists are consistent, they must loudly denounce the very conduct, actions, and relations which the Bible approves. So that it is not we who are at issue with

Esther ix. 26–31. St. John x. 22.

1 Kings v.-viii. Chap. ii 27. 2 Kings xviii. 4; xxiii.

CHAP. I. — the Word of GOD but they. The fact is undeniable; the union of Church and State has Divine sanction. No doubt circumstances have changed, but *principles* have not. If the "establishment of religion," as it is called, was in principle right then, it is right now. With GOD there is "no variableness nor shadow of turning."

3. *Even without such precedent it could never be wrong for a Christian community to recognise and in its constitution profess the Christian religion.* Is that religion a thing to be ashamed of, to be tabooed? What has it done that the State, as a State, should know it no more? It never occurs to Mohammedans or Buddhists; it never occurred even to Greeks or Romans to divorce religion from the State. But we shall be reminded that Christians differ among themselves, and that the State now contains Jews, Turks, and Infidels. Our answer is, that if the majority desires the recognition of Christianity by the State, the minority, as in all other instances, must give way. No wrong is done to that minority. It is not asked to accept, much less support, the so-called "State Church." It has perfect liberty to worship where it will, and as it will, or not to worship at all. It may perchance suffer a certain social inferiority, but it would do that none the less if the Church were disestablished, as the example of the United States shows. That social inferiority is entailed by the ideas —possibly the absurd ideas — of society, not by the Church. Do you say it does violence to their conscience — the very existence of an "establishment." Very good; and it would do equal violence to the conscience of others to do away with that establishment. To them it would seem to be a national insult to religion; to be putting GOD down in a very practical way. The State cannot possibly humour or protect everybody's conscience. The Quaker's conscience objects to war, but he is taxed for it all the same. Some Churchmen object on principle to Board Schools, but they have to support them none the less. The Peculiar People object to doctors, on

religious grounds, but the State makes short work of their scruples. No, there can be no sin in a national recognition of that religion which, as Christians believe, is the only sure basis of morality; the sin would be in a national repudiation of it.

CHAPTER LI

THE CHURCH AS BY LAW ESTABLISHED—PART II.

"The Liberationists now demand from the State the legislative establishment of their modern theory that the Church of Christ was not one body, not one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, but consists of an indefinite and ever increasing number of rival bodies. . . . They have cried to the State in turn to give them establishment, to give them comprehension, to give them toleration, and they are now crying to the State to give them what they call religious equality."—*Rev. T. Hancock.*

In the present chapter I propose to deal with the principal affirmations which form "the religious argument" in "The Case for Disestablishment." I think we may assume that the argument will be presented in that work in its strongest shape. We may be quite sure that if there were any other or weightier reasons to allege, the able writers of this manual would not have overlooked them. Let us see, then, what are the grounds on which they hold that the present (so called) "union of Church and State" is sinful; what are the reasons they offer us for a national repudiation of the Christian religion, or, at any rate, for taking from God the monies which were given to God and for bestowing them on Cæsar. They are these:—

1. "*State Churches are incompatible with the teaching of Christ and His Apostles.*" Yes, but in the first place what do they mean by "*State* Churches"? *Dolus latet in generalibus.* That term begs the whole question. The Church of England was never *founded* by the State; why, historians tell us that the Church of England

existed long before there was any State of England, and indeed had a large share in the making of England.[1] Nor was it ever "*established*" by the State; that is to say, there never was a time when Witenagemote, Senate, or Parliament decided to endow and support a National Church. No statute or ordinance to that effect can be cited. We have used the popular phrases "Established Church," "Church by law established," and the like, for the sake of convenience, but they are most misleading. "There never was a concordat between the Church of England and the State, such as that which Napoleon made with the Pope." The Liberationist knows perfectly well that he cannot point to any Act of Parliament which established the Church. It established itself by slow degrees in the affections and so among the institutions of the people. No doubt the State has *legislated* for the Church, just as she has for Dissenters (in the Act of Toleration, *e.g.*). No doubt she *recognises* the Church, but then she also recognises Dissenting Communions, though not to the same extent. She also to some extent *controls* the Church, but no Nonconformist body can escape, or has escaped, from State control.[2] In this way the Church is "established" and so are the Wesleyans; so is every religious body that has any trust deeds or holds any endowments. It is only a question of degree.

Let us pass over this ambiguous and invidious term, however, and see what Scriptures the Liberationist alleges to prove his position. He has but one text to cite—St. John xviii. 36; and that is beside the mark. It is very significant that only one text can be alleged at all against these so-called "State Churches," for "the institution which has but one text for it has never a one."[3] If the "union of Church and State" were re-

[1] Green, History of the English People.

[2] "Must we for ever go into the Vice-Chancellor's Court to have disputed questions settled?"—*Rev. Dr. Mullens, Congregational Year Book*, 1873.

[3] Whichcote.

CHAP. LI.

pugnant to the will of GOD, as we are now industriously taught, it is inconceivable that our Blessed LORD should not have condemned it. It had existed in its closest form for centuries; existed, men believed, by GOD's own appointment, and existed without challenge or contradiction. If it is incompatible, as we are now told it is, with the teaching of CHRIST, it is singular that He never said a word, not one, to warn us against it. Nay, He said on the contrary that He came not to destroy, but to fulfil. I submit to the candid Nonconformist, whose conscience troubles him about the "Connection of Church and State," that if it were in itself sinful or noxious, *Christ must have denounced it.* The "Light of the world" could not have done otherwise. But He never did denounce it, neither did His apostles. But I shall be reminded that He did say—this is the one text the Liberationist can allege—"My kingdom is not of this world." It is difficult not to suspect, with Dr. Hook,[1] that "this text is cited for the sake more of popular declamation than of solid argument," for who has ever said, where has the Church ever pretended that CHRIST's kingdom is of this world? "It cannot mean less," says *The Case*, "than that our Lord's kingdom is essentially and exclusively spiritual." We are not at all concerned to deny this—though it is not true that His kingdom is "exclusively spiritual"—but what then? His spiritual kingdom is advanced or retarded by *material agencies*—for example, His work cannot be done without both *men* and *money*. His kingdom might be "exclusively spiritual," but still the State can help just as it can hinder it. The question what the State ought or ought not to be or to do for the Church remains just where it was. The fact is, this text has no bearing whatever on the subject of Establishment, as a glance at the context proves. Our LORD had been denounced to Pilate as a king, as a possible rival to Cæsar, and when Pilate asks, "Art thou a king, then," He replies, "Yes, but not

[1] The Church and her Ordinances.

such a king as Cæsar need fear. I have no dreams of temporal dominion. My kingdom is not one of the kingdoms of this world." And this, forsooth, is now made to do duty as proof conclusive that no amicable and reasonable relations should exist—*some* relations there must always be—between Church and State in this or any country!

But I am forgetting that another text has just of late been alleged in favour of Disestablishment. I only cite it to show to what shifts the advocates of this measure on religious grounds are reduced. It is St. Matt. xxii. 21, "Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto GOD the things that are GOD's." *O sancta simplicitas!* As if there were any things which belong to Cæsar and do not also belong to GOD! As if in GOD's universe there could be things with which He had no concern! At any rate, we know that the tribute money is not one of the number. It is just because Cæsar is "GOD's minister" that St. Paul argues that tribute is to be paid to him. He says that it is a matter of *conscience* (ver. 5), *i.e.*, of obligation to GOD, that it should be rendered. And this is the "religious argument" for Disestablishment! Rom. xiii. 6, 7.

Our reply to the Liberationist's first position, therefore, is this: The Church is not a "State Church," as you suggest, and such recognition or control as the State affords it is by no means opposed to the teaching of the New Testament. Moreover, it is certain that if a national profession of Christianity were against the will of GOD, our LORD or His Apostles would have said so.

2. "*The intervention of human law in the religious life of a people is repugnant to the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free.*" Then why, it occurs at once to ask, do you invoke "the intervention of human law" in the religious life of the English people? With one breath you repudiate State control; with the next you clamour for it. For the unceasing cry of the Liberationists is that the religious life and condition of our country,

CHAP. LI.

which is the growth of many centuries, which has "slowly broadened down, from precedent to precedent," should be suddenly and violently dislocated and rearranged by an Act of the Legislature. What interference more flagrant and "repugnant to liberty" can be conceived than taking monies which all allow were given for religion, and applying them to secular purposes, as the State is now urged to do? But let that pass. Let us now inquire what this "intervention of human law" means. It can hardly be intended that the Church, or, for the matter of that, the Chapel, should be *above law*. Surely the New Testament never teaches us *that* — that Christians, because they are Christians, may set law at defiance. On the contrary, it teaches them distinctly to submit themselves "to every ordinance of man, for the LORD's sake;" teaches them, as a part of their religion, to recognise State law, which does not contradict religion, as Divine law. Nor is this any less the teaching of reason and common-sense. Reason teaches that the State, in its province, must be supreme; that no community, religious or secular, can be permitted to defy or disregard the powers that be. That would be to set up an *imperium in imperio*, to invite "red ruin and the breaking up of laws." But perhaps the suggestion is that the Church should be *without law, i.e.*, should be free from all State control; perhaps it is meant that the province of the State and the domain of the Church are entirely distinct — so distinct that they can never touch or overlap. If this is the idea of the writer, it will not bear examination. Neither Church nor Chapel, for example, can hold property, or erect sanctuaries, or conduct services, except on the conditions, by the laws and with the aid of the State. Such "State patronage and control" is inevitable. It has been pointed out that "if Barnabas, instead of selling his land at Cyprus, and giving the proceeds to the Apostles, had sought to convey to them the land for their own use or as an endowment for the infant Church, he would have had no power to transfer

it, and the Apostles would have had no power to receive it, except under the supervision and approval of the State." No, a "free Church" is not free, and never can be, from State supervision and control. If the Church were disestablished to-morrow, this "intervention of human law" would remain. "It is impossible," says Lord Selborne, "that any property should either be acquired or retained by a disestablished Church, or that its ministers should have any churches to officiate in, without a jurisdiction in the State courts to determine questions of doctrine, discipline, and ritual." Besides, we have only to remind Dissenters of the *Stannard* case and others, to prove to them at once that *they* do not, and cannot, escape the "intervention of law" in their own religious affairs.[1] We can only suppose, therefore, that what the writer wishes to convey is that the State is for ever meddling and interfering with the Church's liberty, in her own province of doctrine and discipline. You would think, to read Liberationist literature, that our teachings, offices, and rubrics were constantly being altered by State tribunals. But this is not the case. It is true that every Englishman who thinks himself damnified by the action of bishop, priest, or deacon may apply to the tribunals for redress, but so he may against the minister or officers of the chapel. It is true the courts have had to interpret the teaching of the Church in her formularies—they have not had to *make* her doctrines, that is to say, but to *declare what they are*—but they have had to do the same, and any day may have to do it again, with the trust-deeds of the chapel. The "intervention of law" has been invoked of late in the Tooting Chapel case by no less a body than the Congregational Union—the body which is amongst the loudest in denouncing such intervention as repugnant to

[1] At the present moment (August, 1889), the Wesleyan Conference is proposing to apply to Parliament for an Act. And an American Presbyterian, Professor Briggs, is now advocating an application to the tribunals of the United States, to revise or interpret their Confessions.

CHAP. LI.

Christian liberty. No, we shall never free ourselves not even by disestablishment, from the iron grasp of law. And why should we wish to do so? No law-abiding Churchman is injured by this "intervention of law."

Rom. iii. 3. The law is only a terror to evil-doers. This "law," which is held up as a bugbear, is not an unchristian or unclean thing. On the contrary, it is the shadow of GOD and the foundation of all liberty.[1] Our answer, therefore, to the Liberationist's second argument is this, that no Christian community can possibly escape the intervention of law, and that no right-minded community need resent it.

3. "*He intended His Church to become and to continue a purely spiritual and voluntary community.*" But is this really the case? On the contrary, the last thing that can be truthfully said about the Church is that it is "purely spiritual." Are its members—the men who *constitute* the Church—purely spiritual? Or its officers, or its buildings, or its machinery? We must quote the words again:[2] "A purely spiritual religion is suited only to purely spiritual beings." Not even the *aims* of the Church are purely spiritual. The *body* is to be a

Rom. xii. 1. living sacrifice. Religion is to purify our commerce,

2 Cor. viii. sweeten our homes, open our purses, regulate our mar-

1 Cor. vii. riages, govern our dress, control our meat and drink.

1 Pet. iii. 3. Rom. xiv. 20, 21. And even if we allow that the Church is *largely* spiritual in its aims—as it is—it does not, and cannot, confine itself to "purely spiritual" *means*. Neither the chapel nor the schoolroom is "spiritual;" neither the pastor nor the deacon; neither the minister's stipend nor the missionary collection. But it is now added that the Church should be "voluntary." This cannot mean that no constraint should be put upon the conscience; that no man should be compelled to worship or to give against his will, because no serious person can maintain that such is the case: the paying of tithe is not giving to

[1] "Nur das Gesetz kann uns die Freiheit geben."—*Goethe.*

[2] See p. 168, note 2.

the Church, as we shall prove hereafter.[1] The meaning of the word must be that the Church should have no endowments. But where, let us ask, is this laid down in either Old or New Testament? We are dogmatically told that this was CHRIST'S "intention." We respectfully ask for proof. We want proof that it is against the law of CHRIST for a Christian man to charge his estate with a payment to CHRIST'S Church, or even to give up his estate altogether into the Church's hands for her purposes of peace and good-will. And no such proof can be produced. And if it could, what are we to say of Dissenting endowments? Are they then against the mind and will of our LORD? CHAP. LI.

Acts iv. 34, 37.

4. "*Established Churches have hindered rather than helped religion.*" This is a large order. It would demand a treatise to deal with it adequately. It must suffice to say here that if such is the case, it is singular that—Dissenters themselves being witnesses—there should have been such a marvellous revival of religion in the Established Church of this land. It ought by right to have taken place in the Nonconformist communions; whereas we hear on all hands, and we may add, unhappily, we see proofs here and there of their feebleness, declension, and unfaithfulness. "There never was such a revival of religion," says a professor at the Richmond Wesleyan College, "as that of which the Established Church of this country has been the subject during the last half century." "This revival," writes Dr. Dunckley, a pillar of Nonconformity, "is without a parallel anywhere since the struggles and counter-struggles of the Reformation. . . . Churches which were tumbling into ruin have been restored, and new churches have been built by the thousand. It is needless to go into statistics; the results can be seen everywhere. A comparison of the parish services of fifty years ago with those of to-day is like passing from an assembly of ghosts to one of living men." Elsewhere he refers to the spirituality and zeal

See Note p. 360.

CHAP. LI.

of the clergy. "The very last reason," he says, "that any one could now assign for leaving the Church would be that it starves the soul."[1] If the "Establishment" (whatever that may mean) represses enthusiasm, if it extinguishes zeal, whence this unparalleled growth of the "Established" Church? whence the numerous half-empty chapels and struggling causes of the non-established bodies?

5. "*Established Churches fail to embody the gracious and loving spirit of the gospel.*" To this we answer: That may well be so. We all come far short of the standard of CHRIST. But this failure is not peculiar to *Established* Churches. We have all heard, unhappily, of wrangling and division, strife and envying, malice and spite, amongst the sects. There is no Establishment in America, but we have yet to learn that the "churches" of America contrast favourably in point of piety with the Church of England, or that the gospel is exemplified in the life of the United States in a way to which Englishmen are strangers. Competent observers say that it is just the other way.[2]

6. "*Establishment discourages liberality.*" No doubt endowment does — that is to say, liberality of *one kind*. It certainly has not discouraged liberality in the erection or restoration of churches.[3] And I have understood that in the matter of Foreign Missions,[4] Hospital Sunday,[5] Education,[6] and the like, the Church

[1] *British Weekly*, May 31, 1889.

[2] Mr. T. Hughes quotes the *Nation* newspaper to the following effect:—"It is very certain that our religious faiths, of whatever form and grade, have very little effect at the present moment on our public life."—*The Old Church.*

[3] For example, in 1882 alone, £1,061,602 was expended on church building. Lord Hampton's Return need hardly be quoted.

[4] The contributions of 1883 amounted to £491,647; of late years they have been larger still.

[5] The total amount contributed to the Metropolitan Hospital Sunday Fund during the twelve years ending 1884, by the Church of England was £248,466, as against £85,088 by all other religious bodies put together.

[6] £28,127,147 on schools and training colleges in seventy-four years.

compares favourably with the Chapel. We have even heard of Churchmen giving largely for Chapel purposes. But what Churchmen have *not* done is to provide sufficiently for their ministers. And this they have not done because they have been brought up to think that a maintenance for the ministry is provided already. It has been used as an argument for disestablishment—I mention this as one out of many similar instances—that Churchmen permitted the late revered Vicar of Croydon to draw no more than a beggarly £150 per annum from his benefice, whereas many less wealthy Dissenting congregations pay their minister a thousand a year—those ministers, by the way, who complain that Dissent is the costliest of all professions, and enlarge on the losses they suffer for conscience' sake. But the answer is, first, that this same congregation raised over £3000 a year for other purposes; and, secondly, that the Vicar had ample private means, and was well content to work for next to nothing. That "Establishment" is not answerable for this defect is further proved by the fact that this "Established" congregation is now taking measures to provide a more adequate income for his successor. No; no one has proved or can prove that the relations between Church and State, commonly called "the establishment of religion," have anything to do with the offerings of Churchmen. And we occasionally hear bitter complaints of the niggardliness of Nonconformist voluntaryism. There are—or there were not so long ago—some fifty chapels in Rhode Island without a pastor because the members could not or would not provide a decent maintenance for one. "You gave me thirty shillings last week," said an Independent minister, now a clergyman, "how can you expect me to live upon that?" And what Voluntaryism is capable of, let the chapels of East London and of many poor districts in our larger towns tell. I am not arguing against voluntary effort; God forbid. Nor am I throwing stones at Nonconformists, whose liberality is often beyond all praise. My only contention is that "establishment" is not re-

CHAP. LI. sponsible for the *alleged* illiberality of Churchmen. I say distinctly that this favourite Liberationist argument is not and cannot be proven.

And in view of the principles laid down in a former paper, and the arguments examined in this, I again ask the candid Nonconformist this question: Where is the sin, where the wrong, in the present relations of Church and State, which must compel you, so long as these relations continue, to perpetuate division by standing aloof from the ancient Church of the land? We are constantly told that the "Union of Church and State" is by itself a sufficient reason for Nonconformity. I submit that it is nothing of the kind. I say that the most ingenious of Nonconformists cannot allege any incident of this so-called union which will warrant him or others at the bar of God in maintaining our present state of disintegration, with all the waste, the impotence, the reproach, the strife and bitterness which it involves.

Note. Similar testimony has been borne by another leading Wesleyan, the Rev. J. S. Banks, Tutor of Headingley College: "The greatest event of the nineteenth century," he says, "is the revival that has taken place in the English Church. In the extent and importance of its issues it is not surpassed by the evangelical revival of the last century. For the wonderful energy which that Church has put forth and is putting forth to increase its hold upon our town populations, for all the good it has done in town and village alike, we have no feelings but those of admiration and gratitude."

CHAPTER LII.

COMPULSORY PAYMENTS FOR RELIGION.

'I am unable to justify a refusal to pay tithe on the ground of its being a mode of protestation against the mode in which the tithe is appropriated."—*Mr. Gladstone.*

Is the compulsory payment of tithe, even by those who disapprove of the Church and her teaching, such a violation of the liberty of conscience, or in any way so unjust or unchristian a thing, as to furnish a valid reason for Nonconformity?—this is the next subject for consideration, and it is one which is pressing itself to the front at the present time.

That *voluntary* tithe—the unconstrained dedication to GOD of a tenth (or any other) part of the produce of the soil, of the increase of the fold, or of the harvest of the sea—that *this* is innocent and commendable, all Christians will be agreed. It cannot be wrong, for it is recognised and required by Divine law. Such offerings are the very oldest of religious observances. Such dedication was practised by the patriarchs. Such payment was a prominent part of the Mosaic dispensation. And whatever changes CHRIST may have made—though He "came not to destroy but to fulfil"—it can never be that He has lowered the standard of a virtue, and *that* the virtue of charity, or that a Christian owes less to GOD than the Jew did. On this point there can be no difference of opinion. No, we *may* give, if we will, and if it does not interfere with other claims, "the *half* of our goods to feed the poor;" or, if we prefer, to maintain the ministry of the Church.

Gen. iv. 3, 4. Gen. xiv. 20; comp. Heb. vii. 4; Gen. xxviii. 22. Levit. xxvii. 30; Numb. xviii. 21. 24, 26.

CHAP. LII.

But it is objected that we have no right to *enforce* any such payment. "There were no compulsory payments," says the "Case for Disestablishment," "for religion in the Jewish Church." The tithes paid by the Jews, it is alleged, were purely voluntary offerings. They could
Mal. iii. 8. be withheld, and they sometimes were withheld. It is useless to argue this question, though it is easy to show that the writer is labouring under a delusion. Payment of tithe being a part of Church law, was also a part of *State* law, for, as the writer allows, the Church and the State at that time were one. There were no laws more binding on the Jews than GOD's commands. How then could payment of tithe be optional? Anyhow, when
Mal. iii. 8. payment was withheld, it was denounced as "robbery." If Judaism had not its remedy of distraint, it had effectual methods of securing payment. Let us, however, concede the point. Let us suppose, for the sake of argument—what we know to be false—that the Jew was as free to refuse as to pay his tithe. The question still remains: Is the compulsory *fulfilment of a contract*, is the *payment of a debt* against either Jewish or Christian law and morals?

For this is how the case stands: The tithe-payer is not asked to give, and does not himself give, one farthing to the support of religion. He simply pays a debt which he owes, and which he has undertaken to pay. He fulfils a contract which he made with his eyes open, and which he need not have made if he had conscientious scruples. Having made the contract, and made it for *valuable consideration*, it is too late to plead religious scruples as a reason for not fulfilling it.

It is altogether beside our purpose to inquire what was the *origin* of tithes. They may have been, for anything that affects our argument, imposed by Act of Parliament, though they were not; they are much older than the first Act of Parliament. They may have been given to the clergy by King Ethelwulf in A.D. 885, though they were not; what he gave was a tithe of the produce of his own estates. They may have been, per-

haps they were, originally given to the bishop for him to apportion them as he thought fit. They may have been, perhaps they were, originally charged with a payment to the poor; they might fairly be charged with such payments still, if the Church had them to pay with; if the Crown, *i.e.*, had not laid violent hands upon the larger part of them. But all this is beside the mark. The fact remains that every tithe-payer has either inherited or voluntarily undertaken an obligation to pay, and that all that is asked of him is, that he should fulfil his contract. The Church asks no favours; she simply asks for common honesty as between man and man.

See Note p. 367.

And as little is it to the purpose to inquire to what purpose the tithe is devoted. If it is applied to purposes of which the tithe-payer's conscience disapproves, his remedy is either not to make the contract, or, having made it, to get out of it as quickly as possible. If I buy or hire land charged with a payment to the support of an idol temple, or even to provide wheels for the car of Juggernaut, it is in vain for me to say that I cannot pay because it is against my religion to support idolatry or cruelty. The time for me to show my religion or air my scruples was when the land was offered me. Then there would have been some sense in my making a stand, but it is simply dishonest to make the stand now. My religion can never require me not to pay my just debts. Christianity does not sanction my cheating even an idol temple of its dues. I might with equal reason refuse to pay my grocer or my shoemaker on the ground that he might make a bad use of the money. According to this view St. Paul, who *enjoined* the payment of tribute to Tiberius, should have *denounced* it, because that wicked Cæsar might spend it on his lusts.

It is also to be remembered—though it would not affect the argument if it were otherwise—that a considerable part of the land of this country is tithe free. If, therefore, I want to hire or to purchase land, and if my conscience goes against supporting a paid ministry, or supporting the Church in any shape, let me, what-

CHAP. LII.

ever inconvenience it may entail, buy or hire such land. Or if land suited to my purpose is not to be had, then let me go without. But let me never, for the credit of my reputation and my religion, buy or hire house or land which I know is subject to tithes, renting or buying it *for so much less because of the tithe*, and then, pleading religious scruples, put the difference into my pocket. Religion has enough to contend with already without this fresh crime committed in her name.

I say "for so much less because of the tithe," for, of course, the value of land, for sale or rental, is what it will fetch in open market. And it is perfectly clear that the market value of land charged with a payment of, say, twenty pounds a year is less, and less to that exact amount, than the value of the same or similar land freed from that impost. If, therefore, all land were made tithe-free to-morrow, it would not profit the tenant. If A. B. or C. D. declined to pay twenty pounds more per annum for his holding, plenty of other people, competition being what it is, would pay it, and thus A. B. would find his "occupation" gone. To take or buy land, consequently, subject to tithe rent-charge, and then to keep that rent-charge for oneself, under whatever plea, whether of conscience or convenience, is only a refined form of robbery.

Let us take the strongest possible case. The Friends —or some of them—object to pay tithe on the ground that their conscience will not allow them to support a paid ministry. Here is a piece of land which a Quaker very much desires to buy. It is charged with the payment of tithe, and of course he knows it. Now two courses are open to him as an honest man. It is open for him to say: "I cannot and will not buy this land because it is charged with a payment which I cannot conscientiously make." It is also open for him to arrange with the vendor for the redemption of the tithe, in which case he will of course pay so much more for the land. But it is *not* open to him to buy that land subject to the tithe, paying so much less for it,

because it is subject to tithe, and then decline to pay. In such a case the ancient question cannot fail to suggest itself to the mind, "Tell me whether ye bought the land for so much?" And as long as the answer is "Yea, *for so much*," nothing can justify Quaker or other person in pleading his scruples and pocketing the difference. That is a short and easy method of making gain out of godliness! And it is a painful and humbling reflection that it is only religious persons who, on the ground of their religion, repudiate these obligations. It never occurs to the secularist or the man of the world that having for good and sufficient reasons entered into an engagement to pay tithe, he is at liberty to set it aside on the ground that his conscience will not permit him to pay to the support of religion. They will not fail, we may be sure, to remark that it is only the "professor of religion" can do that.

Acts v. 8.

But the Quaker or the Welsh deacon may say—indeed, he sometimes does say: "I do not dispute the debt, but I decline to pay it, except under compulsion. You are very welcome to come with your sheriff's officer and take it; I shall raise no objection." But what is this but to add wrong to wrong? There are worse things than depriving me of my purse; a worse thing is to take away my good name. And it makes no difference if it is the *Church's* good name that is taken away—or rather it makes the injury all the greater. It is bad enough for the clergyman to have to incur the odium—because, of course, there are always thousands who do not know the rights of the case; who do not know that the tithe is not the clergyman's to give away; that he owes it to the Church, to the parish for which he is a sort of trustee, and to those who come after him, to maintain his rights, to claim his lawful dues—it is hard enough, I say, for the individual clergyman to have to face the odium of seizing the Baptist's or the Quaker's spoons or hay or sheep, and he often pays dear for doing it. It seems to be now quite the proper thing to burn the parson in effigy if he presumes

CHAP. LII. to ask for the payment of this debt, this centuries-old charge on the land. But the injury does not stop there: it extends to a great religious community, the Church; it extends to religion generally, which is in the secular mind identified with these proceedings. It is CHRIST who suffers in the persons of His members and ministers. The Friend protects his conscience—or thinks he does, for really he contributes nothing in paying a rent-charge, either to the Church or the ministry: he merely discharges a debt—he protects his conscience, I repeat, not at *his own expense*—that one could understand and honour—but at the expense of innocent men, men who have done him no wrong. *He* is no martyr, though he is popularly regarded as one; it is the clergyman, who has no option but to enforce his claim; who would be robbing others indeed, if he did not; the clergyman, whose stock in trade is his character, that is damnified, for he comes to be regarded as an extortioner and oppressor. No, the tithe-owner is entitled to say to the Quaker, "Friend, I do thee no wrong: may I not do what I will with mine own?" entitled to remind him that however blessed it is to swear
PS. XV. 4. to *one's own hurt* and change not, there is neither reason nor religion in violating an engagement to the hurt of other people.

And there is another consideration worthy of a moment's notice. We have seen that it is only "religious people"—at least as a rule—whose conscience will not permit them to pay this debt. But that is not all. I say it sorrowfully, but truth compels me to say it, that conscientious scruples are often restricted to the sphere of religion, and that, the religion of other people. For example: the Friend objects on principle to war, and objects to pay for it, at least as much as he objects to a paid ministry. And he knows that some part of the taxes he pays—and indeed a large slice—goes to the support of the army and navy, to building ironclads and providing instruments of death. But we do not find him nevertheless courting distraint and imprisonment as a protest against payment. Yet if conscience requires

it in the one case, surely it requires it in the other. It cannot but suggest uncomfortable suspicions when we find conscience so capricious and elastic.

I submit therefore to the fair-minded Nonconformist that these tithe scandals, this "anti-tithe war" and the rest, whatever odium against the Church they may have created in his mind, really constitute a powerful claim on his sympathy. The tithe rent-charge may or may not be wrongly apportioned; it may or may not be national property—I do not myself believe that it is either one or the other—but so long as the Church holds it she is just as much entitled to it as the private tithe-owner, and no man may with any show of reason renounce her fellowship because she asks for her own.

Note. "The tithe question is one in which he [the tenant] is not interested: the more tithe the less rent: the less tithe the more rent. . . . He [the owner] has no right to complain that his land was subject to tithe, and now is to tithe rent-charge. He owns and holds his land subject thereto. He has no right to it in point of law, except subject thereto. The tithe-owner's title is as good as the landowner's. He [the landowner] might as well complain that a neighbouring field does not belong to him. . . . Let the landowner be careful. Both titles, all titles ultimately rest on prescription. If he successfully assails the tithe-owner, it must be by arguments that will impeach his own. What would be thought of a man who, taking a grant for 999 years subject to a rent, complained that he had to pay the rent? I say then that the rent-charge is the landlord's debt, duty, concern, or by whatever name it is called, and that its existence is no hardship on him."—Lord Bramwell, *Letter to "The Times,"* January 28, 1890.

CHAPTER LIII.

WHAT JUSTIFIES SECESSION?

"Whosoever attempteth anything for the public, especially if it pertain to religion and to the opening and clearing of the Word of GOD, the same setteth himself upon a stage to be glouted upon by every evil eye; yea, he casteth himself headlong upon pikes, to be gored by every sharp tongue. For he that meddleth with men's religion in any part meddleth with their custom, nay, with their freehold; and though they find no content in that which they have, yet they cannot abide to hear of altering."—*Preface to the Authorised Version.*

IN bringing this long series of papers to a close, I am very conscious that I have not met, for I have not attempted to meet, all the objections which our Nonconformist fellow-Christians can and do allege against the ancient Church of their country. All I have essayed to do—and this I think I have done—is to deal with the *stock* difficulties which devout and educated Dissenters find in her doctrines, ritual, or discipline. But even this I have not done exhaustively. I cannot hope, for example, to have anticipated all the objections which may be raised to the arguments here advanced. The limits of the work forbid any such attempt, and had I made it, I should only have wearied, and perhaps puzzled, the reader. The papers are controversial enough already; far more so than I could have wished. But I must be permitted to point out that this controversial element was inevitable, if any solid foundation is to be laid for future re-union. Professor Beet has told us that until either Nonconformists or Churchmen "are better instructed, serious doctrinal differences make

organic union impossible."[1] The truth of God is "first *pure*, then peaceable." Moreover, the polemics which form so considerable a part of this Eirenicon are, with scarcely an exception, strictly *defensive*. Except so far as my argument has involved it, I have not reflected on the beliefs or practices of those who differ from us. It would, I think, be easy to show that if there are defects and blemishes in the Church—as there are and always will be, so long as it is composed of *men*—there are at least equal blots and defects in the system and working and teaching of the Chapel. But I have not done so; I could not do so without provoking the very soreness and temper which it is my earnest desire to alleviate; without still further estranging our separated brethren. I do not know that I have said one word to wound them needlessly. If I have, I entreat their pardon for it, and beg them to believe that it was quite unintentional. However imperfectly I may have attained it, my *aim* has been, all the way through, to defend the Church, not to attack the Chapel. Assured by my own experience that the Church's Bible doctrine is grievously misunderstood and therefore misrepresented, I have tried to lay before others the views and considerations which have brought conviction to my own mind, and in which I have now for many years found rest for my soul.

But here I am in candour compelled to add that there are certain defects in the Church's economy—some of them the results of her relations to the State—which I have not attempted to defend, because I do not know that any adequate defence can be offered for them. The *congé d'élire* is one of these; the difficulty of dealing with criminous or incompetent clerks is another. I do not pretend again that our system of patronage is by any means perfect, and our discipline is confessedly lax and unsatisfactory. I think our services want elasticity and the Prayer Book appears to me to admit of much liturgical enrichment. The Parochial system,

[1] *British Weekly*, December 28, 1888.

CHAP. LIII.

again, admirable as it is, requires some modification. But I entreat Nonconformists to remember, first, that all these things belong to the *accidents*, not the *essence* of the Church's life and administration. And if abuses still remain amongst us, they are, as I have already remarked, nothing like so serious as the abuses which crept into the Church in the Apostles' days; they are not to be compared, for example, with the open teaching of fornication as a part of religion, or the affirming that "there is no resurrection of the dead." Yet the Apostles neither left the Church because of these things nor counselled others to leave it. Secondly, that a marvellous reformation has already been wrought within the Church of England during the present century. Abuses have been corrected, scandals have been stopped; the Church has purged herself of formalism and officialism in a way which few could have dreamed of or hoped for. Whether the bishops were warned to set their house in order or not, they have certainly done so to the best of their power, and this fact of itself furnishes a bright augury for the future. The words of Archbishop Tait are truer now than when he uttered them: "The prospects of this Church of ours are not dark . . . they are bright. Look abroad. What other country in the world would you change churches with. Look at home. Which of the denominations would you prefer? Look back. What age are you prepared to say it would have been more satisfactory to have lived in?" And lastly, I respectfully submit that for such abuses as remain, Nonconformists are largely responsible. I do not merely mean that some Nonconformists have actually set themselves in Parliament to defeat projected reforms —which, to the reproach of our religion, is only too true —but the very existence of Nonconformists, their alienation, not to say hostility, has weakened the cry for reform. If we were not so disintegrated, if Christians, conforming and nonconforming, had been united in their demands, no statesman could have been deaf to their voice. Do you say, then, Christians of the Chapel, that,

Rev. ii. 14. 1 Cor. xv. 12; 2 Tim. ii. 18.

when all is said and done, there are grave blemishes in the Church's ritual or regimen? We answer: "Join with us. For the sake of our common Christianity, for the sake of that strength which unity brings, add your efforts to ours, and you will not have to wait long for their removal. CHAP. LIII.

But what if we could cherish no reasonable hope of their speedy removal? and what if the apology for the doctrines and practices of the Church offered in preceding chapters seems to you still halting and inadequate? Then I submit to you that, *on your own showing*, there is nothing in the constitution or doctrines or demands of the Church, to justify you in the face of our common foes, the world and flesh and devil; in the face of a growing Agnosticism and indifference, and in full view of an aggressive infidelity, there is nothing to justify you in standing apart from us, and so perpetuating division and all its malignant consequences. I say "on your own showing." I appeal to writers of your way of thinking. These are the words of Dr. Marcus Dods: "No doctrinal error which does not subvert personal faith in CHRIST should be allowed to separate churches." I appeal again to the ablest of Nonconformist organs in proof of this position. In the *British Weekly* for April 20, 1888, there appeared a leader under the heading, "What justifies secession?" It was written, of course, by a Nonconformist for Nonconformists, and this is amongst its conclusions: — "That the unity of the brethren, so precious to the Head of the Church, must only be broken for the *most serious of reasons.*" In reply to the question, "What are those reasons," it quotes Rutherford's words, "When a Church *everts the fundamentals.*" And then it proceeds to say that a Church "everts the fundamentals," (1) "When in the *confessions* of the Church any one of the substantials of the Christian religion is denied, and (2) When the greatest part of a Church makes defection from the truth." "Breaking bonds of union," it allows, is "not

CHAP. LIII.

only a great misery, but a grand sin;" "Separation," it confesses, "is a seeming friend, but a secret fatal enemy to reformation;" and finally, it pronounces the following decision, as the practical conclusion of the whole matter:—"*When a church justifies evils and errors, and, after all means are used, persists, and punishes men for using these means, it may become at last a duty to secede. But this only after all means have been tried, and after it is clear that the majority of the church have ceased to keep Christ's Word, and have denied His name.*" This, it says, might "justify secession," but nothing short of this. Then may we ask which, of the many secessions from the Church of England, can be defended on these principles? Has the Church really and truly "everted the fundamentals"? Does it again, in its *confessions*, deny any one of the substantials of our religion, and, if so, which? Does even its doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration—which is the head and front of its offending—"subvert a personal faith in CHRIST," or "justify evils and errors"? In what article, what formulary, is any "substantial" overthrown? Or is it clear that the "majority" of this Church, the Church of Hooker and Jeremy Taylor, of Andrewes and Beveridge, of Barrow and Sanderson, of Kingsley and Arnold, of Westcott and Lightfoot, have "denied CHRIST'S name"? Does any reasonable Nonconformist seriously maintain that such is the case? And if not, on what grounds does he justify his estrangement? For surely, if it be a "grand sin" to *cause* a secession on insufficient grounds, it is no less a sin to *continue* it. To maintain a breach cannot be innocent, whilst to make it is so serious a matter. A wrong remains a wrong until it is repaired. Of course my own view is that *nothing* can justify a breach in the "one body" of CHRIST; that CHRIST must not be, *cannot* be divided; that no amount of heresy can warrant the attempt to lay another foundation than that is laid; but I do not expect Nonconformists to accept this conclusion. But surely, since they have left us, and not we them, we

See Note, p. 376.

have a right to ask them, as our brethren in CHRIST, to tell us what there is in our polity or practice so sinful, so dangerous, as to compel them to "break the bonds of union." If we have "everted fundamentals;" if we have denied the Sacred Name, it is time we knew it. We do not want vague generalities; it is of no use, for example, to talk of "priestcraft" or "Erastianism;" will they kindly specify the *particular* fundamentals which we have overthrown, and show in *what way* our formularies overthrow them?

It may be said indeed that there are wide differences of opinion within the Church of England, almost as wide as those which separate us from Dissenters. But to this we answer briefly, that, even if it is so, differences of opinion are one thing—perhaps they are inevitable—and differences of opinion which result in strife and schism are quite another. The members of a family may differ widely in their views, and no great harm is done. The harm is done when these differences are permitted to *break up the family*—and the Church of God is a family, a household, and all its members are brethren. Dissent, so long as it only means "dissatisfaction with the existing doctrines or practices of the Church," is both "natural and right." There will always be tendencies, teachings, and practices from which right-minded Christians must dissent. It is only when such "dissent" ripens into dissension and division that it becomes unchristian and hurtful.[1] "It is not the differences of Christians that do harm," said Philip Henry, "it is the mismanagement of those differences." The scandal begins when the "household of GOD" quarrels and separates over them; begins, when men who will "do business together and dine together will not worship together." Retain your varied opinions, we say, if you must, but at least let the world see that we can notwithstanding live in peace under the same roof.

1 Tim. iii. 15; Gal. vi. 10; Eph. ii. 19; Heb. x. 21; St. Matt. xxiii. 8, &c.

[1] Curteis, p. 8.

CHAP. LIII.

St. John xvii. Vers. 21, 23.

And this same illustration may help us to understand how entirely unsatisfying would be that mere "union of hearts" to which many Nonconformists look as the only possible realisation at the present day of our LORD's prayer for unity. They think that all we can aim at or hope for is unity of sentiment: organic union appears to them an impossibility. But in that case how is the world to believe that our CHRIST has been sent of GOD? Who is to believe that any real "union of hearts" exists amongst brothers of the same family who, notwithstanding all their professions, decline to "*dwell together* in unity;" who say that they cannot and will not go back to the paternal roof? For let our sentiments be ever so harmonious, still the spectacle of division would remain, and all the waste and weakness and uncertainty which result from such division. The infidel at home and the heathen abroad would be no nearer to conversion than they were before. They could see our divisions for themselves; they could only take our word for it that we were really agreed, and in heart were one.

Once more, therefore, I venture to ask whether our differences are after all so vital as to make Nonconformity an imperative duty. I submit that *we cannot go on as we are.* "A house divided against a house falleth." We must either compose our differences, we must either close up our ranks or prepare for defeat and disgrace. Re-union is no dream, no fancy of enthusiasts; it is a question of life and death. Already our Christianity stands condemned before the world; our everlasting dissensions have made it contemptible. What one of the fathers said of the fourth century is still more true of the nineteenth: "By this we are grown hateful in the eyes of the heathen themselves, . . . and what we object against each other, the same they employ to the scorn and disgrace of us all."[1] And this is not all. The enemies of religion are beginning to ask how long it will

[1] St. Gregory Nazianzen, in Curteis, p. 17.

take to unchristianise England! Already they are exulting over the downfall of our divided house. Neither at home nor abroad will men listen to us until we are agreed amongst ourselves. Yes, "something must be done." We want a new crusade—not to snatch the Lord's sepulchre out of the hands of unbelievers, but to save "His body," His bride, from dishonour and outrage. We want some Peter the Hermit to make his voice ring through Christendom and shame us out of our odious dissensions. And it will come. This Eirenicon, for aught I know, may fall dead from its birth; then some more powerful voice will be raised and will make itself heard. May God hasten the day, and send the deliverer! CHAP. LIII.

> "Flash on us, all in armour, thou Achilles,
> Make our hearts dance to thy resounding tread."

It is possible, indeed, that this Eirenicon will be resented. It is one of the results of our divisions that we are constantly fearing lest the one should steal a march upon the other. So suspicious has been our warfare that even a flag of truce may be fired on. I shall not greatly complain if it should be so. "We know," says Cardinal Newman, "our place and our portion; to give a witness and to be condemned; to be ill-used and to succeed. Such is the law which God has annexed to the promulgation of the truth: its preachers suffer, but the cause prevails." And this cause *must* ultimately prevail. It is only because "blindness in part hath happened unto Israel" that we do not all feel profoundly humiliated by this "war and waste of clashing creeds." It may be that great tribulation is in store for the Church before re-union comes; it may be that the very pressure of infidelity will be the means of re uniting us.[1] Church and Chapel alike can hardly expect that their

[1] "That reunion would come in time he [Döllinger] had no doubt. It would be forced on Christians by the foes of Christianity."—Dr. Liddon, *Guardian*, January, 1890.

CHAP. LIII. jealousies and hostilities will escape all retribution. But that very retribution may be the means, under GOD, of our reconciliation. In time of fire or flood the wild beasts have been known to lie down together. Meanwhile, let all who love our LORD, every man according to his ability, work and pray "for the peace of Jerusalem."

> "I will not cease from mental strife,
> Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
> Till we have built Jerusalem
> In England's green and pleasant land."

Note. To these testimonies may be added one more recent (Oct. 1890): "I thought we had all become convinced that separation could be *justified only as the last resort of persecuted men.* We ought not to think lightly of rending the body of CHRIST."—Dr. Blaikie, *Letter to Dr. A. Bonar.*

APPENDIX.

Note A.

It cannot be too clearly understood that religious disintegration runs with the Anglo-Saxon race, or rather, it is confined to countries where the English tongue is spoken. There is no doubt some Dissent amongst foreign Protestants in Germany and Switzerland, and Russia has her "Old Believers" and other Nonconformists—estimated in Wallace's "Russia" at about one-eighth of her population—but none of these lands exhibit anything like the number and diversity of religious beliefs which are found in England, in her Colonies, and in America. It cannot be altogether a question of race, for the members of the Latin Church are everywhere possessed with a perfect horror of schism, and it must be remembered that in England much of our sectarianism is of comparatively recent date, say, within the present century. It is idle to speculate here as to the *causes* of all this diversified Dissent: whether the abuse of the "right of private judgment," the disregard of authority, or the intense and reckless individualism—a sort of *sauve qui peut*—which religion has assumed amongst us. It is enough to know that it exists, and to such an extent as to inspire foreigners with amazement and contempt. Dr. Döllinger has remarked, that whilst in the Roman Church "Christians professed to accept what they believed to be false rather than risk a schism," "in Scotland, Christians who were entirely agreed as to matters of doctrine thought it worth while to make a schism on the question of patronage."[1] Had he lived a few months longer, he would have seen a secession threatened from the seceding body because two of its theological professors were *suspected* of unsound opinions.

Note B.

It is a favourite idea with many Nonconformists that "each denomination has a particular portion of the truth committed to it by the Eternal Spirit"—its *peculium*—and that to this it

[1] *Expositor*, April 1890.

was raised up and exists to bear witness. But this conclusion will not bear careful examination. It is true indeed that many Dissenting bodies have had their beginning, and now find their *raison d'être,* in the Church's culpable neglect of some doctrine or duty of our religion ; it is also true that they have respectively given great prominence to this doctrine or to that duty, and too often to the sacrifice of all "proportion of the faith." But all the same, it is incredible that the Spirit of Truth should have intended to guide men "into all truth" by committing the custody or assertion of certain parts to certain small portions of the body. For that would mean (1) that the "faith once for all delivered to the saints" can only be learned and held in its integrity by belonging to a dozen denominations ; (2) that GOD designs that large bodies of Christians should be fed and nourished on "bits of the truth ;" and (3) that our LORD'S prayer for perfect unity, and the Apostle's exhortations to "unity in the faith," are alike unattainable. Moreover, (4) it is impossible to say what the *peculia* of some of these bodies—the various sections of Methodism, for example—are ; and (5) as a matter of fact, the teachings of the different denominations are as often contradictory as they are complementary. It may be said, to take one illustration, that the *peculium* of the Friends is the spirituality of the church. But in enforcing this idea they contradict the teachings of all other Christians as to the sacraments, the ministry, and the use of helps and forms. It is impossible, therefore, to see in our divisions the ordinance of GOD, however GOD may have overruled some of them for good. "The divisions of Christians," says Dean Jellett, "have silenced the voice of the Church."

NOTE C.

The kingdom of "the saints of the Most High," which Daniel predicted (chap. vii.), must be a visible kingdom, for it is compared to the kingdoms of Assyria, Persia, &c. ; and the "things concerning the kingdom of GOD" (Acts i. 3), of which our LORD spoke during the great forty days, were, as far as we have any record, the rites and officers and functions of the Church (St. Matt. xxviii. 19 ; St. Mark xvi. 14–19 ; St. John xx. 21, xxi. 15–18). When Dr. Reynolds says[1] that "the kingdom of CHRIST appears to Congregationalists to represent the working of His kingly law upon humanity as a whole," we may fairly ask what "water" can have to do with such a law, or how angels can gather out of a law "them which do iniquity"? (St. Matt. xiii. 41). The following extract from Gore's *Ministry of the Christian Church* may fitly find a place here :—"Is then

[1] *Langham St. Conference, Report*, p. 36.

CHRIST'S new society, the church, simply identical with the kingdom of GOD or of heaven? To answer this question a distinction must be drawn, in view of the double sense in which the kingdom is said to come. In one sense the kingdom is already come; that is, it is established in *spiritual* power and all its forces are at work. But, as St. Augustin has expressed it, 'non adhuc regnat hoc regnum,' for it has yet to grow like the mustard-seed; to work its way like the leaven through all the institutions of the world; it has yet to bear its witness 'to all the nations;' only so at last can the kingdom come *in glory*. Thus in one sense the kingdom already exists; in another sense it has yet to appear. In the first sense, then, the church is the kingdom of heaven, and St. Peter has promised to him the keys, not of the church, but of 'the kingdom of heaven,' which the church is; in the second sense, the church *prepares for* the kingdom rather than *is* it. It represents it in this 'age,' and passes into it with the dawning of the 'age to come'" (pp. 42, 43).

NOTE D.

If I may do it without offence, I think it may be instructive (as indicating the results which must inevitably accrue from such abuse of the "right of private judgment" as would concede to every community of two or three Christians the power to decide for itself, without external advice or control, every question of Christian doctrine and church order, and also as showing that Congregationalism does not furnish a working hypothesis), if I point out here how very little agreement there is among Congregationalist leaders, even on *the* subject which may be regarded as their peculiar province—the nature of the congregation or church. And there is perhaps the more excuse for doing this, because Congregationalists are under the impression that "notwithstanding their jealousy of subscription to creeds and articles . . . they are *far more agreed* in their doctrines and practices than any church which enjoins subscription."[1] I submit that at any rate they are at issue among themselves on the following particulars:—1. *The meaning of the word "church."*—Dr. Fairbairn affirms that the word "*always* denotes an organised society."[2] But Dr. Reynolds argues that "*no* organised society can be the church against which the powers of hell will not prevail;"[3] whilst Dr. Alexander says that *a* church is an organised society, and *the* church is not.[4] 2. *The institution of the Church.*—Dr. Fair-

[1] *The Declaration of Faith, &c.* Preliminary Note, 7.
[2] *Studies in the Life of Christ*, p. 108, note.
[3] *Report of Langham St. Conference*, p. 37.
[4] *Anglo-Catholicism not Apostolical*, p. 137.

bairn alleges that the church is "not an inspiration of GOD, but an institution of man;"[1] whereas Dr. Dale argues that "these societies were founded by the Apostles in CHRIST'S name and with His authority,"[2] and that "the Christian church was an institution founded by the authority of CHRIST."[3] Again, the "Declaration" states (Art. xx.) that "JESUS CHRIST directed His followers to live together in Christian fellowship and to maintain the communion of saints." Dr. Fairbairn, however, contends that "there is no evidence that JESUS ever created, or *thought of creating*, an organised society. There is no idea He so little emphasises as the idea of the church."[4] 3. *The kingdom of heaven.*—Dr. Alexander alleges that "the church is the kingdom of heaven, and the kingdom of heaven is the church."[5] But Dr. Reynolds says that "the kingdom of heaven appears to Congregationalists to . . . be clearly distinguished from the church."[6] Dr. Fairbairn, too, carefully distinguishes (see p. 56 above) between the church and the kingdom. 4. *The door of entrance into the Church.*—Dr. Paton allows that "baptism admits a believer into communion with the church;"[7] and that "in baptism a child or adult is associated with the Church of CHRIST" (p. 26). But Dr. Fairbairn replies that "the Christian society is constituted by faith in CHRIST;" and Dr. Dale holds that "a church is constituted where two or three are gathered together 'in His name.'"[8] To a Churchman these discrepancies suggest that the repudiation of creeds and articles may not be an unmixed blessing, and that a courageous reliance on private judgment on the part of "weak bodies of people" must be fraught with peril to the faith.

NOTE E.

The Nonconformist *British Weekly* (February 14, 1890) allows that success is no proof of character, much less of ordination. "It is one of the chief mysteries of GOD'S kingdom that unspiritual men can do spiritual work; that devils may be cast out in CHRIST'S name by those whom CHRIST knows not."

[1] *Contemporary Review*, April 1890.
[2] *Manual of Congregational Principles*, p. 9.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 16.
[4] *Contemporary Review*, July 1885.
[5] *Anglo-Catholicism not Apostolical*, p. 151.
[6] *Langham St. Conference, Report*, p. 36.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 28.
[8] *Manual*, p. 41.

NOTE F.

The *principle* of Apostolical succession is conceded by the Presbyterian Dr. Dods, who writes thus: "Admission to the ministry being regulated by those already in office, schisms are less likely to occur. . . . If the church was to be kept together and to grow as a consistent whole, it was necessary that those already in office should be allowed to scrutinise the claim of aspirants to office." It was accepted unreservedly by the late Dr. Cumming, who wrote thus: "For my part, if I did not believe that there exists in the Church of Scotland a regular apostolical succession, so far as it was practicable to obtain it, I would not remain a minister of her communion. It is true it came through a source polluted enough, but because it did so, it does not cease to be a reality. . . . The presbyters of the Scottish Church trace their ordination upward through the Church of Rome, we admit; but also, if we had space to demonstrate, through the Culdees to the hands of the Apostles themselves. . . . We find the Apostles received their commission personally from the LORD JESUS, which is the first link in the chain; that they ordained presbyters . . . these last their successors, and so on downwards to the humblest presbyter of the Scottish Church."—*Apology for the Church of Scotland*, 1837, pp. 20–22.

NOTE G.

It is objected—it was by Dr. J. B. Paton at the Langham Street Conference—that the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration (and of Sacramental Grace generally) introduces a sort of materialism into CHRIST'S spiritual religion. He argued, first, that "spiritual blessings are generally communicated by GOD in connection with spiritual means;" as to which it may suffice to refer him to page 168, and to ask him to say what these same "*spiritual* means" are. Can any means, *i.e.*, *media*, be spiritual? Is not the expression, "spiritual means," a contradiction in terms? We cannot conceive of any blessing reaching the soul without some physical medium, for we cannot think, feel, resolve, or repent, so far as we can see, without our bodily organs. *Kein Gedanke ohne Phosphor.* Besides, we do not find in Holy Scripture that "spiritual blessings are communicated by spiritual means"—if such means there are. Forgiveness, for example, is a "spiritual blessing," but it is unmistakably connected with material *media*.[1] And the very expression, "the means of grace," also contradicts him. Grace is a "spiritual blessing," but I am sure he will not say that the means of grace—preaching, prayer-meetings, &c.—are purely spiritual. If there is materialism about the use of water, so

[1] See chap. xxviii. pp. 191 *sqq.*, and chap. xxxiv. pp. 234, 235.

there is about the organs of speech and hearing and the print of Bible and hymn-book. Nay, we may go further, and ask him to say what spiritual blessing there is that does not reach us through the materialism of the Incarnation? If "the Eternal Word became flesh," "this is infinitely more wonderful than that He should use material things as the memorials of His death and the vehicles of a present revelation," and we may add, a present blessing "to the church."[1]

But Dr. Paton also objected that the doctrine that "in baptism life in CHRIST is given,[2] makes the action of GOD in imparting life in CHRIST dependent upon and necessarily associated with an act of man, and that a purely physical act." To which we reply, first, that if this is so, it is only like the action of GOD in imparting *natural* life. Not only is "the gift of life wholly independent of the recipient,"[3] but it is dependent on "purely physical acts." And yet spiritual life is hardly more mysterious or more Divine than so-called "natural" life. If each is "life" and each comes from GOD (Gen. ii. 7; Acts xvii. 25, 28), why should the one be wholly *unlike* the other? But, secondly, we must ask again whether or no in Holy Scripture the gifts of grace are associated with physical acts. The answer can only be that they are (Deut. xxxiv. 9; St. Mark x. 16; Acts ii. 38, viii. 18; 2 Tim. i. 6; 1 Pet. iii. 2, &c.). If we are content to take GOD'S word as we find it, then we must allow that, strange as it may seem to us, the operations of the life-giving Spirit are constantly "dependent on and are associated with" physical acts and means: with water, with the laying on of hands, with the human voice, with the organs of vision. There is no "subjection of GOD'S grace to personal human acts," as Dr. Paton supposes. There is a *connection*—there always will be so long as we are in the body and as GOD works by means—but that is all. All the grace comes from GOD. And it is not tied to means, nor does it work *ex opere operato;* it merely flows by GOD'S appointment *through* the physical medium to the soul of the faithful recipient and to him alone. But Dr. Paton further argued, (3) that since "a profession of faith precedes [adult] baptism," and "faith cannot be exercised without spiritual life," therefore life is imparted *before* baptism (p. 27, cf. p. 25). But where did he learn that "faith cannot be exercised without spiritual life"? We altogether dispute his major premiss. Rahab the harlot, and Samson, and Barak, and Jephthah had faith (Heb. xi. 31, 32); but had they spiritual life? It is true that "faith is the gift of GOD," and that we cannot exercise it without GOD'S "prevenient grace;" but that grace is a very different thing from

[1] Dr. Dale, *Manual*, p. 155.
[2] Westcott, *Report*, p. 21.
[3] Westcott, *ibid.*

supernatural life. It is never described as a gift of the Spirit. And why does Dr. Paton say, "Surely the life is given in faith"? There is no "surely" about it. Our faith is not a magical or meritorious thing, which *per se* wins life for us. As I have pointed out elsewhere (p. 189), belief does not earn the blessing; the "truth of the gospel" is that unbelief hinders it. Grace is not, ordinarily at least, bestowed *without* faith; but it is not given *because* of faith; nor is it given, as Dr. Paton expresses it, "*in* faith." We nowhere read in Scripture that a man was *ipso facto* healed or forgiven just because he had faith to be healed. The leper of St. Matt viii. 2 had faith, but he was not thereby cleansed; he was cleansed by the touch of our LORD (ver. 3). The centurion of ver. 9 had great faith, but it did not avail to heal his servant; that servant was healed by the act and sentence of CHRIST. Of the woman with the issue of blood it was said, "Thy faith hath made thee whole;" but it was not until she "*touched* the hem of His garment" that she felt in her body that "she was healed of that plague" (St. Mark v. 28, 29)—just as on another occasion it was those who "*touched* Him were made whole" (St. Matt. xiv. 36). So with the blind men in St. Matt. ix. 27–30; they had faith, and they professed it before they were healed (ver. 28); but healing was not given "in their faith," but through a physical act: "Then *touched He their eyes*, saying, According to your faith be it unto you." In St. Mark vi. 5 we find that our LORD could do no mighty works in His own country "because of their unbelief" (St. Matt. xiii. 58); but we also find that the "few sick folk," who, believing, were healed, were healed because our LORD "laid His hands" upon them. The blind man of St. John ix. was not healed *in* his belief in the Son of GOD (vers. 35, 36); he had been healed already (before he knew who our LORD was), and by such material *media* as clay and spittle (vers. 6, 7). And, to content ourselves with one example more, the cripple in Acts xiv. 8, although he had "faith to be healed," remained a cripple until St. Paul spoke the healing word (ver. 10). All these cases prove conclusively that whilst faith is a *conditio sine qua non* of grace and blessing, *i.e.*, where belief or unbelief can be exercised, still the blessing comes, not in the act of faith, but through channels, through *media*, and those *media* physical acts or processes. Nor is it any answer to this argument to say that all these were instances of bodily restoration, because, first, we cannot doubt that in most cases, if not all, the bodily cure was accompanied by a spiritual benefit; the man who had faith to be healed had also faith to be forgiven; and (2) it is hardly conceivable that He who came to "save His people from their *sins*" would succour the body and at the same time do nothing for the soul. It may have been partly to teach us that forgiveness was part of the benefit that our LORD said to the paralytic, "Thy sins be forgiven thee" (St. Luke ix. 48).

But in any case, His dealings with the body in the days of His flesh are surely a parable of His action on our souls; yes, and they are constantly taken as such by Nonconformists. And being such, it is to pervert all their teaching to assume that life and blessing are given "in faith," or that "personal human acts" can have no instrumental efficacy in GOD'S dealings with our souls. But let us now turn to Dr. Paton's last objection. He says boldly—it has been said before—that the doctrine of baptismal regeneration can be tested by facts. He asserts that missionaries have had greater success amongst the unbaptized cannibals of the South Sea Islands than in countries where baptism has been almost universal (p. 25). Now, let us say here once for all, that we decline to appeal from CHRIST'S express words to facts or supposed facts. It is not that we fear the result of that appeal. The Church Missionary Society missionary who testified that between the Travancore native Christians—low though their state be—and the idolatrous Hindoos "there is a gulf that seems impassable,"[1] shall answer the missionary in Raratonga. No; we do not fear the appeal, but we think it both dishonouring to our LORD and fallacious to the last degree to make it. Fallacious, because the facts are uncertain and disputed; because, if they were clear and certain, our interpretation of them may well be mistaken; because there are too many complications in the case to justify rough and ready inferences. I will only remind Dr. Paton that the argument he uses against a particular doctrine is applied by others to Christianity at large. "Tested by results," it is said to be a gross failure. But he believes it nevertheless. I may remind him, too, that when, a few years ago, it was proposed to submit the question of the efficacy of prayer to the test of results, and to *prove* CHRIST'S promises in the wards of a London hospital, he, unless I am greatly mistaken, rejected the proposal with scorn. He saw at once that there were complications which would make the appeal to facts fallacious. *One* complication—in this case of baptism—has been incidentally mentioned by Dr. Westcott. "The gift of life," he reminds us, "is wholly independent of the recipient himself; the support of life *requires for its efficacy his co-operation.*"

"Our churches," says Dr. Paton (p. 28)—and he rightly describes this as "the crux of the differences between us"—"do not consider that GOD'S action in imparting or sustaining spiritual life is so conditioned by material acts that it only or necessarily accompanies these." Well, we do not consider either that grace is *confined* to these.[2] But will he produce one single instance of conversion or edification that has been mediated without some "material acts"?

[1] Quoted in Sadler's *Second Adam*, p. 152.
[2] See p. 167.

INDEX.

"ABRAHAM'S bosom," 294.
Absolution, doctrine of, 231–249; ministerial, 234; a part of ministry of reconciliation, 236; taught in Scripture, 237; pronounced by Christ, 240; always necessary, 242.
—— forms of, 245–49; why restricted to priests, 246; in Visitation of Sick, 247–49.
"Act of Parliament Church," 106-7.
Alexander, Dr. W. L., quoted, 30, 56, 379, 380.
"Altar, under the," 294.
"Amen," meaning of, 299.
Anglican divines, 122–23.
Apostles, commissioned to absolve, 241.
Apostles' Creed, 261, 268, 271.
Apostolic Churches, imperfect, 98.
Apostolic succession, 162 *n.*; held by Dr. Cumming, 381.
Arnold, Matthew, quoted, 80 *n.*, 125.
Article IX., 183 *n.*
—— XIX., 90.
—— XXIII. and XXXVI., 136.
Ashwell, Canon, quoted, 344.
Athanasian Creed, 263–82; forced on the Church, 265–67; not forced on laymen, 270; provable by Scripture, 272; germ of, in baptismal formula, 274; damnatory clauses, 277.
Augsburg, Confession of, 91 *n.*
Augustine, S., quoted, 85, 218, 284.
Authorised version, preface to, quoted, 368.

BALLARAT, Bishop of, quoted, 12.
Banks, Rev. J. S., quoted, 360.
Baptism, Holy, admits to Church, 66–71; indelible, 84; "generally necessary," 177–81; sponsors in, 227.
—— by John, 192; of St. Paul, 193.
—— infant, 171–76.
—— lay, 72 *n.*
Baptismal regeneration, 183–89; prevalence of belief in, 187; what if untrue, 188; scriptural, 191–95.
Baptist, sect, 176 *n.*
—— Union, 92
Barrow, Isaac, quoted, 146 *n.*
—— and Greenwood, 313.
Barry, Bishop, quoted, 12.
Basil, S., quoted, 262.
Baxter, Richard, quoted, 168, 207, 314.
Beet, Professor J. A., quoted, 98 *n.*, 188 *n.*, 196–97, 305, 340, 368.
Bellarmine, Cardinal, quoted, 48 *n.*
Ben torah, 228.
"Bible Christians," origin of, 14.
Bible Society not a Church, 98.
Bidle, John, 311.
"Binding and loosing," 74.
Binney, Dr. T., quoted, 3 *n.*, 134.
Bishops, beginning of, 152–53.
Blackie, Professor J. S., quoted, 119.

"Body," definition of, 26; use of word by Nonconformists, *ib.*; by St. Paul, 27; "mystical," 26 *n.*; must be visible, 35.
Bossuet, quoted, 231.
Bramwell, Lord, quoted, 367.
"Breaking of bread," *see* Supper.
Briggs, Professor, 355.
British Weekly, quoted, 254, 369, 371.
Brown, Rev. J. Baldwin, quoted, 125.
—— Robert, 60.
Brownists, 59, 60.
Bruce, Dr., 178 *n.*
Bull, Bishop, quoted, 45.
Burial service, 283; its rubric, 284; for the living, *ib.*; no verdict on the dead, 285; for members of a society, 286; therefore denied to non-members, *ib.*; why used over drunkards, &c., 287.
Butler, Bishop, quoted, 29, 89.

CALVIN, quoted, 43 *n.*, 122, 202; a persecutor, 311.
Canons, the, 75.
Carlyle, T., quoted, 257.
Casaubon, quoted, 126.
Case for Disestablishment, the, 350.
Catechism, the, 196.
"Catholic Apostolic Church," 133.
Chalmers, Dr., quoted, 127.
Chapel, prayers of the, 255–56 *n.*, 332.
"Child of God," 198.
Children, loved of God, 171; fit for the Kingdom, 173; partakers of the promise, 175; blessed by Christ, 199.
China, needs of, 12; societies in, 13.
Christians, priesthood of, 328.
Church, the, before Christ, 17; one body, 18.; continued under Gospel, 23; visible, 29; soul of, 32 *n.*; a school, 43; membership in, 64; in confusion, 66; admission to, *ib.*; corruptions in, foreseen, 102; built on persons, 111, 112 *n.*; to be judged by her standards, 325.
Church Army, 94–95.
—— of England, not a sect, 105; did not secede from Rome, 109; continuity of, 111; objections to, 133.
—— of Rome, 108; converts to, 124.
Church Missionary Society not a Church, 93.
—— *Quarterly, The*, 162.
"Churches," the, once "societies," 52, 55; of Asia, 54.
—— ornate, 115.
"Churchman" defined, 65, 76 *n.*
Clarke, Dr. A., quoted, 126, 256.
Clemens Romanus, 150.
Clergy cannot hide God, 330.
Coleridge, S. T., quoted, 122 *n.*, 310.
Colonies, sects in the, 12.
Commination service, 296; taken from the Bible, 297; not imprecatory, 298–99; a warning, 299; required by abeyance of discipline, 300.
Confirmation, 218; "from heaven," 219; Apostolic, 221; older than New Testament, 222; a "principle," 223; its *rationale*, 224; renewal of vows in, 227; no ground for schism, 230.
"Congregation," meaning of, 22, 91, 139.
Congregationalism, 59–63; its founder, 60; repudiates creeds, 61; unsatisfying, *ib.*
Congregational Union, 179 *n.*, 338.
—— Year Book, 11, 118.
Congregationalists not agreed, 379.
Continuity, law of, 24–25, 328.
Conversion, 184.
Convocations recognise royal supremacy, 106.
"Consecration," meaning of, 304.
—— rite of, misunderstood, 303; an act of dedication, 304; a scriptural usage, 305–6; still necessary, 306.
Cooptati, 138.
Corpora in Rome, 27.

Council of Jerusalem, 24.
Creed, Athanasian, 263–282.
Creeds, repetition of, 261.
Cromwell, quoted, 308, 311.
Cumming, Dr. Jas., quoted, 381.
Curteis, Canon, quoted, 2 *n.*, 61, 313, 373.
Cyprian, S., quoted, 237, 260.

Dale, Dr. R. W., quoted, 59–62, 92, 99, 149, 213, 217 *n.*
Davidson, Dr., quoted, 60.
Declaration, the Independent, 60, 61, 214, 217 *n.*
Decretals, forged, 109.
"Delivery to Satan," 95.
De Maistre, quoted, 10.
Didache, the, 158 *n.*, 253 *n.*
"Disciples," meaning of, 43; how enrolled, 68–69.
Discipline, hindered by divisions, 300; difficult under Voluntaryism, 301.
Divisions, 9–14.
Doctrines, perversion of, 245, 266, 325.
Dods, Dr. M., quoted, 51 *n.*, 54, 55 *n.*, 139 *n.*, 157 *n.*, 371.
Döllinger, Dr., quoted, 324, 375.
Dort, Synod of, 127.
Draw-net, parable of, 39, 40.
Dunckley, Dr., quoted, 336, 357.
Dykes, Dr. T., 83 *n.*

Ecce Homo, quoted, 37.
Edwards, Dr. T. C., quoted, 119.
Elders, appointment of, 151, 152.
Election of Matthias, 62.
Episcopacy, argument for, 152–55.
Episcopate, historic, 162.
Episcopus, 154.
Establishment, argument for, 325–31; against, 332–42.
Eucharist, 327.
Exclusiveness, charge of, 316–21.
Excommunication, 72; *ipso facto*, 76; puts out of benefits, 77; not out of Church, *ib.*
Extempore prayer, 251, 255–56 *n.*
"Evangelicals," the, 123, 337.

Fairbairn, Dr., quoted, 56, 70, 379, 380.
Faith, 274–75, 383.
"Faithful men," 91.
Fathers, the, 121.
"Five points, the," 118, 335.
Forgiveness of sins, by God alone, 232; on conditions, 233; through means, 235.
Freeman, The, quoted, 182 *n.*
Fuller, Thomas, quoted, 59 *n.*, 114.

Genealogies of Christ, 50 *n.*
"Generally necessary," 177.
Gibbon, on Episcopacy, 145.
Gladstone, Mr., quoted, 99, 342, 361.
Godet, Professor, quoted, 155.
Gore, Rev. C., quoted, 155, 328, 379.
Grace, *see* Sacramental Grace.
Green, J. R., quoted, 351.
Gregory I., 49.
Gregory IX., 108.
Grotius, quoted, 126, 145, 147.
"Gospel," what it is, 335; according to Evangelists, 336; to St. Paul, 337–38; St. Peter, 339; where preached, 340.
"Gospel A B C," the, 337, 349.
Guardian, The, quoted, 129.

Hall, Bishop, quoted, 105, 226 *n.*
Hands, laying on of, 140, 160.
—— —— *see* Confirmation.
Hampton, Lord, his Return, 358, *n.*
Hancock, Rev. T., quoted, 350.
Head of the Church, 48; not visible, 47–49.
Heard's *Tripartite Nature of Man*, quoted, 190.
Henry Philip, quoted, 113 *n.*, 373.
Heresy defined, 82; does not separate from the Church, 81.
"Holy," meaning of, in Bible, 304–305.
Hook, Dr., quoted, 352.
Horsburgh, Rev. J. H., quoted, 13.
Horton, Rev. R. F., quoted, 54, 90, 92 *n.*, 319 *n.*
Households, baptism of, 175.
Hughes, Thomas, quoted, 358.

INDEPENDENCY, 59–63.
Independent Declaration of Faith, &c., 60, 61, 214.
"Independent Bible," 160.
Infants, baptism of, 171; reasons for, 171–76; no ground for schism, 176.
Infants, unconsciousness of, 199; no bar to blessing, 200–202.
Intermediate state, 290; taught by the Church, *ib.*; not by the Chapel, 291; yet a Scripture doctrine, 294–95.
Intervention of law in religion, 353; invoked by Dissenters, 355.
Intolerance, charge of, 308; what if true, 309; not because of Church, *ib.*; Nonconformists chargeable with, 311; especially in New England, 312–13.
Invisible Church, 31; the company of faithful dead, 33.

JACKSON, "History of Confirmation," 220 *n.*
Jacobson, Bishop, quoted, 62.
Jeroboam, sin of, 19, 50.
Jewish Church, one, 18–21; continuity with Christian, 22–26; its head, 47.
Jewish priests, 327.
John, St., xv. 1–10, 41.
—— xx. 21, 240.
John Ward, Preacher, 335.
Jonathan, his sect, 19.
Jus Cyprium, 108.

"KINGDOM of heaven," 39, 56–7.
Kneeling at the Lord's Supper, 115.

LAUD, Archbishop, 311.
Lay baptism, 72.
Laying on of hands in orders, 160; in confirmation, 220; apostolic, 221; patriarchal, *ib.*; used by Christ, *ib.*; its object, 224; a fundamental, 225.
Leprosy, 238.
Liberality, how affected by Establishment, 358.
Liddon, Dr., quoted, 156, 328.
Lightfoot, Bishop, quoted, 145.
Littledale, Dr., quoted, 108.
Liturgical forms, 250–6; used by all Christians, 251; by Christ, 252, who prescribed a form, *ib.*; by apostles, 253; in early Church, *ib.*; suitable, 254; need not be formal, 255; never perfect, 257; in chapels, 250.
Lord's Supper, *see* Supper.
Luther, Martin, quoted, 121, 190, 231.

MACAULAY, History, quoted, 312.
Mackarness, Bishop, quoted, 316.
Macleod, Dr. N., quoted, 346.
Madras, sects in, 10.
Magna Charta, 109 *n.*
Malebranche, quoted, 25 *n.*
Manual of Baptism, Beet's, 188, 196–202.
Marks of Church, the, 89–99.
Marriage feast, parable of, 40.
Matthias, appointment of, 62.
Means of grace, 165–68, 235.
Melbourne, Bishop of, quoted, 12.
"Members of Christ," 197.
Methodism, divisions in, 7, 14, 102.
Methodist Societies, not churches, 91–99.
Methodist Times, The, quoted, 3, 7.
Meyer, Rev. F. B., 131.
Millenary petition, 114–15.
Milligan, Prof., quoted, 10, 31.
Ministry, the, 135–62, 329–33.
Missions, sterility of, 13.
Missionary societies not churches, 93.
Monod, A., quoted, 205.
Moreland, Miss, 143 *n.*
Mullens, Dr., quoted, 60, 351.

NATHAN, absolution of, 239.
Nations to be baptized, 174.
"Necessary doctrine," the, 220 *n.*
"Nonconformist," origin of name, 318 *n.*
Nonconformists, not excommuni-

cate, 75; in the Church, 72–88; have conformed, 116; though left it, 318; refuse to worship with the Church, 320.
Nonconformist, The, quoted, 139–40, 161 *n.*
Nonconformity unknown to apostles, 54; then inconceivable, 54 *n.*; grounds of, 129.

ORDERS, 135; repudiated by Nonconformists, 138 *n.*; in Scripture, 148–55; from above, 160.
Organisation necessary to a Church, 97.
Original sin, 191.
Orthodoxy not proved by success, 98.

PAN PRESBYTERIAN SYNOD, 130 *n.*
Paradise, 294.
Parker, Archbishop, quoted, 115 *n.*
—— Dr., quoted, 140, 236 *n.*, 293 *n.*
Paton, Dr., quoted, 181.
Pearson, Bishop, quoted, 52.
Peculia of sects, 377–78.
Penny, Dr., quoted, 127.
Perry, 313.
Perowne, Dean, 90–99.
Persecution under Commonwealth, 311.
—— in New England, 313.
Phillimore, Sir R., quoted, 111 *n.*
Pilgrim Fathers, 126.
Pius IV., creed of, 108.
Pius IX., 48 *n.*
Plummer, Dr. A., 153 *n.*, 272 *n.*
Prayer, extempore, 251, 255.
—— Lord's, 60, 252–59.
—— Order of, 257–59.
Prayers, State, 262.
Preaching, gospel, 334–41.
Presbyters, 154.
Priests, 326–31.
Priestly functions, 330.
Prodigal son, parable of, 41.
Proselytes, baptism of, 173.
Puritans, the, 312.

QUEEN ELIZABETH excommunicated, 107.
Quicunque, the, 263–82.

REANEY, Rev. G. S., quoted, 60.
Reformation, the, 109, 110.
Reformers, foreign, 121; English, 122.
Regeneration, meaning of, 184–85; Simeon on, 185; Dr. Paton, 382.
Religion in England, 7, 377.
Remission of sins in baptism, 190; held by Evangelicals, 191; taught in Scripture, 192–93; embraces infants, 195.
Ignatii, 283 *n.*
Reunion, work on, 3; in the air, 3; a necessity, 374.
Reynolds, Dr. H. R., quoted, 181, 379–80.
Ring in marriage, 115.
Robertson, F. W., quoted, 29.
Rogers, Rev. J. G., quoted, 231 *n.*
Roman claims, 40–9.
Romanists, a sect, 107–8.
Rome, sects in, 10.
Rutherford, quoted, 371.
Ryle, Bishop, quoted, 204, 305.

SACERDOTALISM, charge of, 164, 324; what it is, 325–29. in Judaism, 327–28.
Sacraments, 163–216.
Sacramental grace, 163; from God, 165; *gratis, ib.*; conditional, 166; not tied to means, 167.
Sacrifices, 205; their meaning, 206.
Sadler, Prebendary, 2 *n.*, 181, 197, 201, 268.
Salvation Army not a Church, 94; its gospel, 340.
Savoy Conference, 114–15.
—— Declaration, 214.
Schism defined, 82; does not separate from Church, 83.
Secession not required, 100; what justifies, 368.
"Sect," meaning of, 79 *n.*
Sects, number of, 8; their beginnings, 14, 79, 318.

CAMBRIDGE

Sectarianism defined, 231; its working, 11.
Selborne, Lord, quoted, 355.
Servetus, 311.
Seven, appointment of the, 148–51.
Shields, Dr. C. W., quoted, 3; 117 *n.*
Simeon, Rev. C., 185 *n.*
Simon Magus, 79.
Sins, forgiveness of, 232–35.
Skeat's History, quoted, 312.
Smith, Canon Travers, quoted, 171 *n.*, 174.
"Spiritual body," the, 58.
Spurgeon, Mr., quoted, 43 *n.*, 51, 81, 194 *n.*, 256 *n.*, 333.
"Standard-case," the, 355.
Stanton, Rev. V. H., quoted, 36 *n.*
State, relations of, to Church, 342; God's institution, 343; not secular, 344.
"State Churches," 380.
State prayers, the, 241.
"State made prayers," 345.
—— bishops, 345–46.
Stoughton, Dr., quoted, 61, 314.
Success no proof of orthodoxy, 98; or of ordination, 380.
Supper of the Lord, 204; takes place of sacrifice, 205–7; a feast on a sacrifice, 208; few references to, 209; not a bare commemoration, 213–16; not a proper sacrifice, 326; cannot hide Christ, 211, 331.
Supremacy, royal, 106.
Surplice, use of, 114.

TAIT, Archbishop, quoted, 370.
Tares, parable of, 39.
Taylor, Jeremy, quoted, 223 *n.*, 225 *n.*, 269–70, 276.
"Teetotal Church," the, 17.
Temple, Bishop, quoted, 16, 21.
Thirlwall, Bishop, quoted, 264.
Tithes, ordained of God, 362; position of, in England, 362–63; a contract, *ib.*
"Tooting Chapel case," 355.
Tonstal, Bishop, quoted, 109.
Trent, Council of, 167.
Trinity, the, 265.
Turgot, quoted, 121.

UDAL, 313.
Unchurching, charge of, 99.
Union of Church and State, 346; of God, *ib.*; sanctioned by Christ, 352.
United States, sects in, 15; persecution in, 313.

VAUGHAN, Dean, quoted, 267–68.
Virgins, parable of the, 40.
Visible Church," the, 29; meaning of term, 35.
Visible head of Church, 45.
Vice does not separate from Church, 79, 80.
Vine and branches, parable of, 41.
Voluntaryism, defects of, 359.

WALL, *Infant Baptism*, quoted, 171.
"Water and Spirit," 178–79.
Watson, Rev. F., quoted, 28, 162.
Webb, Bishop, 328.
Wells, Rev. James, quoted, 335.
Wesley, 64, 96, 100, 126, 203, 334.
Wesleyan Methodist Society not a Church, 53, 90; not yet assumed the name, 100.
—— splits from, 102.
Wesleyan reformers, 14, 73 *n.*, 79.
Westminster Assembly, 313.
—— Confession, 66 *n.*
Whately, Archbishop, quoted, 290, 295.
Wheatley, quoted, 283, 296.
White, Rev. Edward, quoted, 99, 116, 332.
Witherow, Dr., quoted, 146.
Williamson, Dr. A., quoted, 10, 13.
Wordsworth, Bishop Chris., quoted, 234, 244.

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